HELLO, MY NAME IS *JOAN PETERSON...*

...AND I **PROBABLY LOVE YOU.**

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–Francesco Francavilla

VOL.1 LOVE EVERLASTING™

King **Charretier** **Hollingsworth** **Cowles**

LOVE EVERLASTING

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LOVE EVERLASTING

Created by
Tom King & Elsa Charretier

Collected Edition
Collecting LOVE EVERLASTING #1–5

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I LOVE YOU, *JOAN...* AND I *ALWAYS* WILL!

AND I LOVE YOU, *GEORGE!* AND *TOMORROW* I'LL BE YOUR *BRIDE!*

ELSIE HOLLINGSWORTH

POOR *GEORGE!* WHY DO I HAVE TO *LIE* TO HIM? WHY CAN'T I TELL HIM *THE TRUTH?* THERE IS *NO TOMORROW!!*

MEANT TO BE

Tom King
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I KNEW IT WAS WRONG. HE WAS MY BOSS AND MY BEST FRIEND'S STEADY. STILL, EVERY TIME I LOOKED OVER AT GEORGE, I COULDN'T STOP MYSELF FROM THINKING HE AND I WERE...

HE'S EVERYTHING I *EVER* WANTED AND EVERYTHING I CAN *NEVER* HAVE!

AFTER SCHOOL ENDED, I GOT UP THE COURAGE TO MOVE FROM INDIANA TO NEW YORK CITY, AND I WAS ROOMING WITH MY BEST FRIEND MARLA...

HELP W

MARLA WAS NICE ENOUGH TO HELP WITH THE RENT AS I SETTLED IN, BUT I KNEW I HAD TO FIND A JOB EVENTUALLY!

THERE'S ***NOTHING*** IN HERE FOR ME! EVERYONE WANTS EXPERIENCE. WHAT EXPERIENCE DO I HAVE?

HOME SWEET HOME

CHERRIES

JOAN PETERSON, YOU COME TO THE CITY ***FOR*** EXPERIENCE!

I WAS ***JUST*** WHERE YOU ARE A YEAR AGO, NO JOB AND NO MAN. ***NOW*** LOOK AT ME!

GEORGE MIGHT ASK ME TO ***MARRY*** HIM TONIGHT!

I HOPED MARLA WAS RIGHT, BUT I COULDN'T HELP THINKING THAT THE WORLD IS SO LARGE AND NOT EVERYTHING ALWAYS TURNS OUT FOR THE BEST.

WHAT DO ***YOU*** THINK? WON'T HE ***LOVE*** IT?!

I COULDN'T SLEEP THAT NIGHT. WORRY RAN THROUGH ME, UP AND DOWN. MAYBE I CAN'T DO THIS, MAYBE I SHOULD JUST GO BACK HOME.

IT WAS NEARLY MIDNIGHT WHEN I HEARD MARLA OUTSIDE TALKING TO GEORGE. I KNEW I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T LOOK, BUT I FOUND MYSELF AT THE WINDOW...

BY THE TIME I SAW THEM, GEORGE HAD MARLA IN HIS ARMS. I WONDERED WHAT IT WOULD BE LIKE TO BE HELD LIKE THAT.

AND SUDDENLY HIS LIPS WERE ON MINE, AND THEY WERE WARM AND KIND.

SO

I LOOKED AWAY, ASHAMED OF WHERE MY MIND HAD TAKEN ME.

I HAD JUST MANAGED TO GET BACK IN BED AND CLOSE MY EYES, WHEN MARLA UNEXPECTEDLY BURST INTO MY ROOM, HER FACE STILL FLUSHED.

OH, JOAN, I'M ***SO*** SORRY TO WAKE YOU, BUT I HAVE JUST THE ***BEST*** NEWS!

I HEARD THE FEAR IN MY VOICE, AND I HOPED MARLA DIDN'T NOTICE.

DID...DID HE ASK YOU TO MARRY HIM?

OH ***NO,*** SILLY, IT'S TOO EARLY FOR THAT.

BUT I WAS TELLING GEORGE ALL ABOUT ***YOU*** AND YOUR TROUBLES, AND ***GEORGE*** SAID HE NEEDED A NEW SECRETARY AT THE OFFICE!

AND HE SAID HE'D ***LOVE*** TO HIRE YOU!

GEORGE'S HANDSHAKE WAS LIKE THE MAN HIMSELF: STRONG, YET WELCOMING. THOUGH I WAS VERY NERVOUS ON MY FIRST DAY, HE MADE IT ALL SO EASY.

SOON I WAS BUSY AS A BEE. I KNEW I WASN'T THE FASTEST TYPIST IN THE POOL, BUT I ALSO KNEW I COULD OUTWORK ANYBODY ELSE THERE!

ESPECIALLY IF IT WAS TO HELP GEORGE...

THIS IS ***EXCELLENT*** WORK, MISS PETERSON. I DIDN'T EXPECT TO SEE IT DONE FOR ***DAYS.*** WELL DONE.

OH, ***THANK*** YOU, MR. HUFF. IT'S MY PLEASURE.

PLEASE, CALL ME ***GEORGE.*** I KNOW YOU WORK FOR ME, BUT WE'RE ***MORE*** THAN BOSS AND SECRETARY, AREN'T WE?

WITH HIS WORDS, MY HEART JUMPED OUT OF MY CHEST AND INTO MY THROAT. I COULD HARDLY GET EVEN A SOUND OUT.

OH.

YOU KNOW, BECAUSE OF ***MARLA.***

AND IS IT ALL RIGHT IF I CALL YOU JOAN?

MARLA! OF COURSE MARLA! WHAT WAS I THINKING?! WHY WAS I SO ANXIOUS IN THERE?! HE'S JUST MY BOSS! THERE'S NOTHING MORE.

AND YET...

EVERY DAY THAT WENT BY, EVERY TIME I SAW HIM, I COULDN'T HELP BUT FEEL SOMETHING.

IT WAS AS IF THERE WAS A STRING ATTACHED TO BOTH OF US, AND WHEN WE WERE APART THE STRING PULLED AT ME, AND EVERYTHING WAS TENSE.

AND WHEN WE WERE TOGETHER, THE STRING RELAXED AND EVERYTHING WAS JUST AS IT SHOULD BE.

EVERYTHING WAS JUST PERFECT.

I TRIED MY BEST NOT TO THINK ABOUT IT. BUT WHATEVER I DID, IT SEEMED EVERYTHING WOULD POINT AGAIN TO GEORGE.

I CAN'T PLAY TOO LATE TODAY, I HAVE A ***BIG*** DATE TONIGHT.

OH? I'M ***SUPPOSED*** TO MEET GEORGE BACK AT THE OFFICE TONIGHT AFTER HIS FLIGHT GETS IN, TO WORK ON THE MILLER FILE FOR TOMORROW.

I DIDN'T ***THINK*** HE'D HAVE TIME TO GO OUT.

OH, THIS ISN'T ***GEORGE.*** THIS IS ***JACK.***

HE'S A REALLY ***NEAT*** GUY I'VE BEEN SEEING.

I'M GOING OUT WITH ***GEORGE*** ON SATURDAY.

THAT NIGHT, WE WERE ALONE IN THE OFFICE.

I REALLY APPRECIATE YOU COMING BACK INTO THE OFFICE, MISS PETERSON.

YOU'RE A LIFESAVER.

DON'T YOU REMEMBER?

IT'S *JOAN* NOW.

I... YES...

JOAN...MY JOAN...

AS HIS LIPS FELL ON MINE, I THOUGHT THIS MUST BE ANOTHER DREAM AND I LET MYSELF FLOW INTO IT, KNOWING I WOULD SOON WAKE.

BUT IT WAS ALL TOO REAL!

I'M SO SORRY...I *SHOULDN'T* HAVE...

I'M A *FOOL!*

I TUSSLED AND TURNED ALL NIGHT. MY HEAD WAS FLOODED WITH GUILT AND LONGING. I KNEW IT WAS WRONG! AND JUST AS MUCH, I KNEW I NEEDED MORE!

OH, GEORGE! GEORGE! GEORGE!

DAYS PASSED, AND THEN WEEKS, AND THEN MONTHS. IN THE WORLD, I WAS A GOOD SECRETARY AND A GOOD ROOMMATE. IN MY HEART, I WAS DYING.

FINALLY, I ADMITTED DEFEAT. I HAD FOUGHT THE CITY AS BEST AS I COULD AND THE CITY HAD WON. IT WAS TIME TO GO HOME!

JOAN, WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?*

I'M LEAVING!

I THOUGHT I WAS ***MEANT*** TO COME HERE! I THOUGHT I WAS BIGGER THAN WHATEVER ***DESTINY*** ALL THOSE PEOPLE BACK HOME HAD PLANNED FOR ME!

BUT I WAS ***WRONG!*** THERE ARE SOME PLACES YOU JUST ***BELONG,*** AND YOU SHOULD JUST ***STAY*** THERE!

BUT YOU ***CAN'T*** LEAVE NOW, YOU'LL MISS MY WEDDING!

HE FINALLY ASKED ME! AND I SAID ***YES!***

AND THERE IT WAS, THE FINAL BLOW, BRINGING ME DOWN. EVEN AS I RETREATED, THE ENEMY ARMY JUST KEPT MARCHING OVER ME.

THAT'S AMAZING. I WISH YOU AND GEORGE ALL THE BEST.

MAY YOU HAVE THE ***HAPPINESS*** SO... SO FEW OF US GET.

BUT THEN.

BUT THEN!

BUT THEN!!!

GEORGE? WE BROKE UP ***WEEKS*** AGO. I THINK HE'S IN ***LOVE*** WITH SOMEONE ELSE.

NO, THIS IS ***JACK!*** HE'S SO SHARP, I CAN'T BELIEVE ***I*** GET TO BE WITH HIM!

THE BIG CITY IS A TOUGH PLACE, DON'T LET ANYONE TELL YOU DIFFERENT.

YOU WANTED TO SEE ME, MR. HUFF?

I MEAN, *GEORGE.*

BUT JUST BECAUSE IT'S TOUGH DOESN'T MEAN YOU'RE NOT TOUGHER.

YES, JOAN, I HAVE SOMETHING *VERY* IMPORTANT TO TELL YOU.

TAKE IT FROM ME. I LIVED THERE.

YOU CAN NO LONGER BE MY *SECRETARY!*

OH NO!

AND I LOVED THERE.

BECAUSE NOW YOU'LL BE *MY WIFE!*

GEORGE! MY GEORGE...

One Last Kiss

Tom King
writer

Elsa Charretier
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letterer

THOUGH I LOVED HIM, I COULDN'T STAY. I WAS THE GOOD GIRL, THE GOOD DAUGHTER WHO WOULD MARRY THE MAN HER PARENTS CHOSE. AND KIT WAS JUST A DOWN-AND-OUT SINGER FROM THE VILLAGE. AFTER THIS I KNEW I'D RUN, BUT FIRST I HAD TO HAVE...

THIS IS THE END, THIS HAS TO BE THE END. BUT WHY CAN'T I LEAVE?!

I WAS BORN AND RAISED ON CRESCENT CREEK, AN HOUR OUTSIDE OF THE CITY WHERE FATHER WORKED EVERY DAY.

JOAN PETERSON, PROMISE ME *ONE* THING.

YES, DADDY?

I KEEP READING ABOUT THESE DOWNTOWN *HOODLUMS* GETTING ALL THE KIDS *RILED UP* WITH THEIR NEW MUSIC.

YOU PROMISE ME TO STAY AWAY FROM THAT TYPE.

OH, DADDY, YOU HAVE *NOTHING* TO WORRY ABOUT.

WHO DO YOU THINK I AM?

KISS

I HATED TO LIE TO FATHER, BUT I COULDN'T BEAR TO BREAK HIS HEART AND TELL HIM THAT I'D ALREADY BEEN SNEAKING OUT AT NIGHT AND GOING "DOWNTOWN."

HE JUST DIDN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT IT WAS LIKE IN THE VILLAGE, WHERE YOU COULD BE FREE OF ALL THE BURDENS OF MONEY AND

WAIT.

GEORGE

WHERE'S

AND THAT NIGHT MY FATE CERTAINLY TWISTED! FOR THAT WAS THE NIGHT I FIRST LAID EYES ON KIT!

HELLO, I'M ***KIT MYERS.*** THANK YOU FOR COMING OUT.

THIS SONG IS CALLED "*WHEN THE LUCK RUNS OUT.*"

I HOPE YOU DIG IT.

THERE'LL BE HANGIN' AND BANGIN' AND SHUFFLING AND BUSTLING...

THERE'LL BE KILLIN' AND THRILLIN' AND DYING AND LYING...

THEY'LL ALLLLLL COME ON BOOOOOARD AND GIVE OUT THEIR SHOOOUT...

WHEN THE LUUUUCK RUNS OUT.

IF I STAYED OUT TOO LATE, I'D MISS THE LAST TRAIN BACK TO CRESCENT CREEK, BUT SOMEHOW I FOUND MYSELF WAITING BEHIND THE CLUB, HOPING...

NO... THIS ISN'T... WHERE'S...

AND JUST WHEN I WAS GETTING READY TO RUN, THE DOOR SWUNG OPEN AND THERE HE WAS, A SMILE ON HIS FACE THAT SEEMED TO FLY RIGHT TO MY HEART.

GEORGE?

DID... DIDN'T I MARRY GEORGE?

WELL, WHO ARE YOU, ***BEAUTIFUL?***

SHOULD ***YOU*** BE HERE?

WE TALKED ALL NIGHT. HE WAS INSPIRING AND INTERESTING. UNLIKE ANY MAN YOU MIGHT MEET AT THE CRESCENT CREEK COUNTRY CLUB ON A SUNDAY GOLF TRIP.

IF YOU READ KIERKEGAARD, YOU'D KNOW THAT THERE IS A ***WHOLE*** NEW WORLD AVAILABLE TO YOU IF YOU JUST ***COMMIT*** TO IT.

OH, ***WOW,*** I'LL DEFINITELY PICK THAT UP.

*A WHOLE NIGHT TOGETHER AND ALL WE DID WAS **TALK.** IT WASN'T UNTIL THE LIGHT OF MORNING, WHEN THE TRAINS WERE RUNNING AGAIN, THAT HE AT LAST TOOK ME IN HIS ARMS AND I FELT HIS LIPS ON MINE.*

OH, JOAN.

THEY WERE SO DIFFERENT FROM GEORGE'S LIPS.

WAIT, WHO'S GEORGE? I'VE NEVER KISSED ***GEORGE.*** I DIDN'T MARRY GEORGE.

WE WERE...

TICKET, MA'AM?

I...

YOUR ***TICKET,*** MA'AM.

HOW FAR ARE YOU HEADED?

I'M NOT IN LOVE WITH GEORGE! I DON'T KNOW WHO THE #%#@ GEORGE IS!!

I LOVE KIT!!

I STARTED TO SEE KIT WHENEVER I COULD GET AWAY FROM CRESCENT CREEK. WE SHARED OUR AMBITIONS AND OUR DREAMS.

I DON'T WANT TO JUST LIVE THE PLASTIC LIFE, JOAN, I WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE, YOU DIG?

I FEEL THE SAME WAY.

SOON I WAS WATCHING **EVERY** ONE OF HIS PERFORMANCES ON STAGE, IN AWE OF HOW HE **POURED** HIMSELF INTO HIS MUSIC AND LYRICS.

WHO CARES IF HE WASN'T RICH OR FROM **CONNECTICUT** OR APPROVED OF BY **DADDY?**

HE WAS TRUE AND REAL AND THAT WAS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING.

I'VE **NEVER** FELT LIKE THIS BEFORE, JOAN. I'VE NEVER **SAID** THIS BEFORE. JOAN, I LOVE YOU.

KIT, OH MY, KIT. I **LOVE** YOU TOO!

DAYS WENT BY WHERE I DIDN'T EVEN THINK ABOUT GEORGE OR MARLA OR THE OFFICE OR THE APARTMENT OR INDIANA OR

THEN CAME THE NIGHT THAT CHANGED EVERYTHING.

THERE'S SOMETHING I ***HAVE*** TO ASK YOU, JOAN, SOMETHING ***IMPORTANT.***

YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVE YOU, ***GEORGE.*** YOU CAN ASK ME ANYTHING.

JOAN?!

FATHER! WAIT, NO, I CAN EXPLAIN...

WE WILL TALK ABOUT THIS WHEN YOU GET HOME, YOUNG LADY!

FOR NOW, YOU WILL SAY GOODNIGHT TO YOUR... ***FRIEND,*** AND THEN YOU WILL COME WITH ME ON THE TRAIN! AND I MEAN ***NOW!***

WHO...?

OH NO!

WHO'S GEORGE?

FATHER AND I FOUGHT FOR HOURS THAT NIGHT. I TOLD HIM I LOVED KIT, AND HE JUST COULDN'T HEAR ME. HE USED A TONE WITH ME I'D NEVER HEARD BEFORE.

I HAVE PLANS FOR YOU! ***BIG*** PLANS! AND I FIND YOU IN THAT NEIGHBORHOOD WITH SOME LITTLE ***STREET RAT*** SINGER. CAN'T YOU SEE WHAT YOU'RE DOING?! YOU'RE ***RUINING*** YOUR LIFE!

I WENT TO BED IN TEARS, KNOWING THAT I WOULD NEVER SEE GEORGE AGAIN.

*NO, I MEAN...I...I MEAN I WENT TO BED IN TEARS, KNOWING THAT I WOULD NEVER SEE **KIT** AGAIN. KIT. NOT GEORGE.*

I DON'T KNOW GEORGE.

THE NEXT DAY AT BREAKFAST, I RESOLVED TO TELL FATHER I WAS THROUGH WITH KIT, THAT I COULD REJECT LOVE, BUT WHEN I SPOKE, THE WRONG WORDS JUST CAME OUT!

FATHER, I KNOW I DISAPPOINTED YOU, BUT I JUST NEED *YOU* TO UNDERSTAND I'M IN LOVE...

Ding Ding

I'D HOPED A GOOD NIGHT'S REST COULD GET THAT ***NONSENSE*** OUT OF YOUR MIND, JOAN.

I DON'T KNOW ***WHO*** THAT IS AT THE DOOR, BUT AS SOON AS THEY ARE GONE, WE WILL CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION AND WE WILL TALK ABOUT YOUR INHERITANCE!

D

LOVE, LOVE, LOVE, WHAT DO YOU YOUNG PEOPLE EVEN KNOW ABOUT...

...LOVE?

HELLO, MR. PETERSON, I'M KIT ***HARRIS,*** I THINK YOU KNOW MY FATHER.

I'VE COME TO ASK YOUR DAUGHTER SOMETHING.

YOU...YOU'RE... ***MITT HARRIS'*** SON?! THE MITT HARRIS WHO'S A PARTNER AT MY FIRM?!

WHY, HE'S ONE OF THE BEST MEN I KNOW!

THOUGH HE WAS TALKING TO MY FATHER, KIT'S EYES LOCKED ON MINE.

YEAH, I DON'T LIKE TO TELL PEOPLE ABOUT MY DAD, I'M AFRAID THEY'LL JUDGE ME BY HOW I GREW UP OR THE HOUSE I LIVE IN.

I WANT PEOPLE TO SEE ME THE WAY *I* AM.

THE WAY *JOAN* SEES ME.

I'M SORRY I DIDN'T TELL YOU. I WAS A ***COWARD.*** I WAS AFRAID YOU WOULDN'T LOVE ME AND I WAS AFRAID...YOU WOULDN'T...WELL, YOU WOULDN'T AGREE TO BE MY WIFE!

THIS WAS IT, THE MOMENT I'D WAITED MY WHOLE LIFE FOR, THE MAN I NEEDED, THE ARMS I NEEDED, THE LIPS I NEEDED, THE LIFE I NEEDED...

OH, ***KIT,*** DON'T YOU KNOW, WITH ME...

...YOUR LUCK WILL ***NEVER*** RUN OUT!

AND IT WAS ALL A #%@%ING LIE.

MITT HARRIS' KID! ***HUH!*** WELL, I'LL BE A MONKEY'S...

EVER SINCE I WAS A GIRL AND HE WAS A BOY, I KNEW I'D MARRY CHAD HESTLE, SON OF THE TOWN SHERIFF. IT WAS MY FATE AND I WAS HAPPY TO EMBRACE IT. BUT ONE DAY MY FATHER HIRED A NEW RANCH HAND, BILL HARPER, AND SUDDENLY IT FELT LIKE FATE HAD OTHER PLANS, THAT MAYBE THERE JUST HAD TO BE A...

Fight FOR LOVE

TOM KING WRITER
ELSA CHARRETIER ARTIST
MATT HOLLINGSWORTH COLORIST ☆ CLAYTON COWLES LETTERER

NO! CHAD! BILL! THEY'LL *KILL* EACH OTHER. I NEED TO HELP ONE OF THEM! BUT *WHICH ONE?!*

IT WAS JUST ANOTHER DAY ON OUR HUMBLE MARICOPA RANCH. I EXPECTED TO DO MY CLEANING AND COOKING AND THEN TAKE DUSTY ON A RIDE THROUGH THE PLAIN.

JOAN! JOAN, DARLING, I GOT A *FELLOW* HERE YOU OUGHT TO MEET!

JUST ANOTHER DAY.

JOAN, THIS IS *BILL HARPER,* OUR NEW RANCH HAND. AND BILL, THIS IS MY DAUGHTER MISS JOAN PETERSON--

--SOON TO BE *MRS.* JOAN HESTLE, WHENEVER GOOD OLD CHAD GETS AROUND TO IT.

HOWDY, MA'AM. PLEASURE TO MEET YOU.

JUST ANOTHER DAY.

I... WHAT...

GEORGE...WHAT HAPPENED TO *GEORGE*...AND *KIT,* THERE WAS...WHAT ABOUT KIT?

IS HE STILL SINGING?!

JUST ANOTHER DAY.

JOAN, I DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND THE SHAKE OF YOUR SPURS, HONEY.

THIS IS *BILL.* I DON'T KNOW ANY GEORGE OR KIT. WHAT'S THE MATTER HERE, HON?

JUST ANOTHER DAY.

IS THERE SOMETHING I COULD HELP WITH, MA'AM?

GIRL AS FIT AND PRETTY AS YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE TO BE ALL BOTHERED. NOT WHILE *I'M* HERE.

JUST ANOTHER DAY.

I CAN SEE WHY THIS *CHAD* FELLOW HAD TO FALL HARD FOR YOU.

CAN'T SAY I'M ANYTHING BUT JEALOUS.

GET AWAY FROM ME!

JOAN?

I HEARD THAT A NEW HAND HAD COME TO THE HOUSE AND I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU'D LIKE TO GO ON AN EARLY RIDE WITH *ME,* JOAN.

DID YA HEAR ME THERE, JOAN? I THOUGHT YOU AND I MIGHT GO FOR A RIDE. MAYBE THERE'S A VERY *SPECIAL* QUESTION I'D LIKE TO ASK YOU...

JOAN?

JOAN, IS THERE SOMETHING WRONG?

JOAN?!

JOAN, WHERE YOU RUNNING TO?!

I RODE IN NO PARTICULAR DIRECTION AND I RODE HARD.

THOUGH I TRIED TO KEEP FOCUSED ON THE TERRAIN AHEAD, MY THOUGHTS TURNED AGAIN AND AGAIN TO GEORGE AND KIT AND BILL AND CHAD...

I SAW MY LIFE AS THREE WOMEN FLOWING TOGETHER, LIKE CREEKS MEETING IN A RIVER.

AND SOMEHOW I FELT LIKE I HAD FALLEN IN THAT WATER, THAT IT WAS RUSHING OVER ME, AND WHEN I OPENED MY MOUTH TO SCREAM, IT ALL CAME IN AND I KNEW I WAS DROWNED.

DAYS AND NIGHTS PASSED. I CANNOT RECALL HOW MANY.

I ENCOUN-TERED NO ONE AND KEPT RIDING.

AT SOME POINT, DUSTY COULD TAKE NO MORE AND FELL BENEATH ME. USING A KNIFE, I CUT THE BEAST'S THROAT, NOT WANTING TO LEAVE IT SUFFERING.

I WALKED FROM THEN ON.

WHAT WATER AND FOOD I HAD I DOLED OUT IN HUMBLE PORTIONS, BUT THE JOURNEY WAS ENDLESS AND MY SUPPLIES WERE NOT.

EVENTUALLY, THE PAIN IN MY FEET CAME INTO MY LEGS AND MY BACK AND MY HEAD, AND I FELL TO THE BROILING DESERT FLOOR.

THOUGH THE SUN SHINED DOWN BRIGHT...

...THE WORLD CREPT TO BLACK.

I SLEPT.

I DREAMED.

WHEN I WOKE, I WAS NEXT TO A FIRE, LYING ON A THICK BLANKET. THERE WERE TREES ABOVE ME. I COULDN'T REMEMBER SEEING TREES FOR DAYS.

AND I WAS NOT ALONE.

YOU JOAN PETERSON?

I DON'T KNOW YOU.

WHERE THE *HELL* DID YOU COME FROM?

I GOT A MESSAGE FOR A MISS JOAN PETERSON.

IF YOU WOULD PLEASE CONFIRM THAT IS YOUR *MONIKER,* I WOULD HAPPILY DELIVER SAID MESSAGE AND BE ON MY GOOD WAY.

WELL, I'M JOAN PETERSON.

WHAT'S YOUR *DAMN* MESSAGE?

AS HE HESITATED, I TOOK A MOMENT TO CONSIDER HIM IN THE FIRELIGHT.

HM.

THERE WAS SOMETHING FAMILIAR TO ME IN HIS FACE.

YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE RUN, GIRL.

SOMETHING KIND AND WARM.

THIS WORLD IS HARSH AND WIDE. RUNNING DON'T GET YOU ANYWHERE.

MISS JOAN PETERSON.

SHE WOULD LIKE YOU TO KNOW...

LOVE IS... *EVERLASTING.*

NO!

SAL CAME TO OUR HOSPITAL TO DIE. HE'D GIVEN UP ALL HOPE OF FIGHTING THE DISEASE RAVAGING HIS BODY. THAT'S WHEN I MET HIM, THAT'S WHEN I DISCOVERED THAT I TOO COULD BE...

SICK WITH LOVE!

TOM KING writer
ELSA CHARRETIER artist
MATT HOLLINGSWORTH colorist
CLAYTON COWLES letterer

WHEN I GOT READY FOR WORK THAT DAY, I HAD NO IDEA THAT I WOULD MEET--

AH, FUCK.

TO BE CONTINUED.

BOO

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ROGER, I *LOVE* YOU! BUT AT SOME POINT LOVE *HAS* TO DIE! AND SO DO *YOU!*

"THE HUNT FOR LOVE!"

JOAN! MY DARLING! NO, PLEASE! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?!

I WAS THE DAUGHTER OF THE NURSEMAID. HE WAS THE SON OF THE LORD OF THE HOUSE. CLASS AND WEALTH SEPARATED US. AND YET WE BOTH WERE BOUND TOGETHER BY ONE THING...

THE HUNT FOR LOVE!

Chapter 1

JOAN, ***DARLING,*** PLEASE! CAN'T YOU SEE THAT NOTHING ELSE MATTERS?! NOT MY FATHER! NOT MY POSITION! NOT THIS HOUSE!

THE ONLY THING THAT MATTERS--IS ***YOU!***

ALL THESE YEARS! IT'S WHAT I'VE ***ALWAYS*** WANTED TO HEAR! AND YET I KNOW, EVEN IF HE BELIEVES IT'S TRUE, IT'S ALL A ***LIE!***

TOM KING
writer

ELSA CHARRETIER
artist

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
colorist

CLAYTON COWLES
letterer

THIS IS THE ABBEY INTO WHICH I WAS BORN AND IN WHICH I WAS RAISED.

HUMBLY KNOWN AS HILL HOUSE, IT SITS ON THOUSANDS OF ACRES AND IS HOME TO GENERATIONS OF NOBILITY, THE LORDS AND LADIES OF WESTSHIRE.

THOUGH THIS WAS AND ALWAYS WILL BE MY HOME, I MYSELF WAS NOT OF SUCH HIGH BLOOD. I WAS MERELY, BUT PROUDLY, THE DAUGHTER OF THE NURSEMAID.

MY PRETTY LITTLE GIRL, LOOK AT YOU, YOU LOOK JUST LIKE ME MUM. IT'S LIKE LOOKING BACK IN TIME, ISN'T IT?

WE'LL HAVE TO CALL YOU *JOAN,* THEN. DON'T SEE A CHOICE ABOUT IT.

MEANWHILE, ON THAT SAME DAY, AT THAT SAME HOUR, JUST A FEW FLOORS ABOVE, THE LADY OF WESTSHIRE WELCOMED HER FIRSTBORN, THE HEIR TO THE LAND AND HEARTH.

THERE, YOU SEE, A BOY, AS PROMISED.

OUR *ROGER.* THE NEXT ROGER.

WHAT A LEGACY YOU INHERIT, CHILD, WHAT A LIFE YOU SHALL LEAD.

THE LADY OF THE HOUSE WAS KINDLY, AND SHE ALLOWED MY MOTHER TO CARE FOR ME AS SHE HELPED TO RAISE THE YOUNG LORD ROGER.

AND IN THAT CONTEXT, WE TOOK OUR FIRST STEPS TOGETHER.

SAID OUR FIRST WORDS TO ONE ANOTHER.

WE TAUGHT EACH OTHER HOW TO PLAY.

WE TAUGHT EACH OTHER HOW TO LAUGH.

AND YES, DESPITE MY MOTHER'S MANY, MANY PROTESTS, WE TAUGHT EACH OTHER TIME AND AGAIN HOW TO FIGHT.

AND...HOW TO LOVE!

AS FOR OUR FIRST KISS...

ROGER! TODAY I AM FOURTEEN YEARS OLD AND TODAY YOU ARE ***ALSO*** FOURTEEN YEARS OLD AND SO WE HAVE TO KISS!

ALL RIGHT.

WELL...

IT WAS SHARED.

HA HA HA HA HA HA

AND IT WAS LOVELY.

HOWEVER, AS THE YEARS PASSED, WE LEARNED QUICKLY ENOUGH THAT THOUGH WE WERE BORN IN THE SAME ILLUSTRIOUS MANOR...

WE STILL LIVED IN TWO SEPARATE WORLDS.

JOAN!

HELLO, ROGER.

DO YOU LIKE MY NEW OUTFIT? THE BOOTS WERE A GIFT FROM ***THE KING*** FOR MY BIRTHDAY. THEY CAME WITH A VERY KIND NOTE WISHING ME WELL.

AND TODAY FATHER IS TAKING ME ON MY FIRST HUNT, ISN'T THAT JUST ***THRILLING,*** JOAN?

OH, IT'S SO ***WONDERFUL,*** ROGER! I BET YOU CATCH FORTY PHEASANTS! AT LEAST!

I WISH YOU COULD COME, I DO. I AM SO USED TO HAVING YOU BY MY SIDE. NOTHING FEELS QUITE RIGHT WITHOUT YOU.

DON'T BE ***SILLY.***

ANGELICA IS ILL AND I HAVE TO PREPARE THE CURTAINS IN THE GRAND HALL ON MY OWN.

IT WILL TAKE HOURS. NOT THAT...

BUT I WOULD LOVE TO ONE DAY, I WOULD LOVE TO LEARN TO ***SHOOT*** AS YOU DO.

I WOULD LOVE TO...I WOULD LOVE FOR YOU TO TEACH ME.

YOU'LL DO THAT, ***WON'T*** YOU, ROGER? PLEASE, PLEASE PROMISE ME.

AND SO THE DAYS SLIPPED BY, AND WE EACH MET THE OBLIGATIONS ASSIGNED TO US AT BIRTH.

ROGER WENT UPON HIS WAY.

C'MON, CHESTER, GIVE IT A GO, OLD BOY. ***GLORY*** AWAITS.

AND I WENT UPON MINE.

AREN'T YOU A ***FILTHY*** THING? HOW HAVE THEY BEEN TREATING YOU TO GET YOU THIS WAY?

YEARS PASSED, AND I WAS GIVEN A PERMANENT POSITION IN THE HOUSE. MY MOTHER TOLD EVERYONE I WAS BLESSED, FATED EVEN, TO BECOME THE HOUSE-KEEPER OF HILL HOUSE.

IF YOU COULD IMAGINE.

ROGER SEEMED TO GROW MORE CONFIDENT (AND MORE DASHING!) EACH DAY.

HIS UNTARNISHED REPUTATION AS A MAN OF AMBITION AND FORTITUDE SPREAD ACROSS THE COUNTRYSIDE, AND MANY A GOSSIP WONDERED WHO WOULD BE THE LUCKY LASS TO FINALLY CATCH HIS EYE.

SOON THE LADY WAS ARRANGING FOR DOZENS OF GIRLS FROM THE BEST FAMILIES, FROM ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, TO COME TO HILL HOUSE AND MEET MY ROGER.

I MEAN, AND MEET ***HER*** ROGER.

OF COURSE THAT'S WHAT I MEAN. HOW STUPID OF ME.

BUT THEN AGAIN...

JOAN...

ROGER?

JOAN, I...I WAS WONDERING... WELL, I'M SORRY TO...

BUT...BUT YOU SEE...I REMEMBER I...I DID ***PROMISE*** YOU... A WHILE BACK...TOO LONG, REALLY...BUT I SAID...IF YOU...I'VE BEEN THINKING ON IT...

WELL, I HAD SOME TIME AND...AND I THOUGHT PERHAPS WE MIGHT...

IS EVERYTHING ALL RIGHT, ROGER?

YOU LOOK FLUSHED.

JOAN, WOULD YOU...COULD YOU...

I...I WOULD BE HAPPY IF I MIGHT SHOW YOU HOW TO SHOOT, TAKE YOU ***NOW,*** IN FACT.

YOU DID SAY YOU ***WANTED*** TO LEARN, JOAN. DIDN'T YOU?

OH, YES, VERY MUCH.

JOLLY! THAT'S...

THAT'S JUST ***JOLLY!***

ROGER TOOK ME TO A SMALL COTTAGE HALF A MILE FROM THE HOUSE, NEAR THE EDGE OF THE WEST FOREST.

THEY KEPT THE SHOTGUNS HERE, HE EXPLAINED POLITELY, AND WE COULD TAKE THEM AND GO TO THE WOODS AND PRACTICE.

I WOULD LIKE THAT, ROGER.

TO *PRACTICE*, I MEAN.

YES, THAT WOULD BE...

HE WAS SUDDENLY SO CLOSE TO ME. I FELT HIS HEART BEAT AS I'M SURE HE FELT MINE.

OH JOAN.

AND THEN...OH, AND THEN...THEY WERE BEATING AS ONE!

WELL? HOW...

IF YOU START IN WITH THE *LAUGHING*, JOAN DARLING, I'M JUST GOING TO ABOUT *DIE!*

NO.

NO, NO, NO, MY SWEET, MY *OWN*, MY *ROGER*. THAT WAS DIVINE.

BUT WEREN'T WE HERE FOR THE SHOOTING?

HIS LIPS UPON MINE, I SHOULD'VE FELT SAFE, SECURE, AS IF ALL THE PROBLEMS OF YESTERDAY WERE MERE SOAP BUBBLES, SO EASILY POPPED AS WE REACHED OUR HAPPILY EVER AFTER. BUT INSTEAD I KNEW WE WERE JUST AT THE BEGINNING OF...

THE HUNT FOR LOVE!

Chapter 2

ROGER! MY SON! MY BOY!

HOW COULD YOU *SHAME* OUR FAMILY LIKE THIS?! HOW COULD YOU *BETRAY* WHO YOU ARE?!

TOM KING
writer

ELSA CHARRETIER
artist

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
colorist

CLAYTON COWLES
letterer

AFTER OUR FIRST--NO, SECOND!--MAGNIFICENT KISS, ROGER AND I WENT BACK TO OUR OWN WORLDS. I CONTINUED TO PREPARE THE HOUSE FOR THE EVENING...

AND HE CONTINUED TO PREPARE HIMSELF FOR THE GLORIOUS DESTINY THAT HAD AWAITED HIM SINCE BEFORE HIS BIRTH.

WHENEVER WE'D SEE EACH OTHER, IT WAS ALL HANDLED VERY FORMALLY. IF ANYTHING, IT WAS PERHAPS A BIT MORE STIFF AND REHEARSED THAN BEFORE.

MISS PETERSON.

MY LORD.

BUT EVERY FEW DAYS, HE'D COME TO ME AND OFFER ME A "HUNTING LESSON," AND WE'D DASH OFF TO THE SMALL COTTAGE WITH ALL THE GUNS.

HURRY, ***DARLING,*** THE HOURS ARE NOT AS LONG AS THEY SEEM!

OH, ROGER, REALLY!

AND THERE WE'D FIND OUR SANCTUARY AND WE'D AGAIN SHARE OUR KISSES.

YOU KNOW, JOAN, ***DARLING,*** WE DON'T HAVE TO GO AHEAD WITH THE FARCE OF THE HIKE AND THE HOUNDS. WE MIGHT SPEND THIS TIME MORE... ***INTIMATELY.***

I WISH IT WERE SO SIMPLE, ROGER.

ARROOOF!

ARROOOF!

BUT IF WE NEVER LEAVE THE INSIDE OF THAT HOUSE, THEN THIS ***FLIMSY*** EXCUSE WILL TAKE TO THE WIND FASTER THAN THOSE BIRDS.

NO, EVERYONE THINKS YOU ARE THE ***KIND*** GENTLEMAN TEACHING AN OLD, ***POOR*** FRIEND A NEW TRICK.

AND I'M AFRAID WE MUST DO OUR ***BEST*** TO ACT THAT OUT.

KAPOW

OR RISK ***LOSING*** IT ALTOGETHER!

WAS IT NOT A *FINE* SHOT, ROGER?! I AM GETTING ***QUITE*** GOOD, AREN'T I?

YES, MY DARLING. QUITE!

WEEKS PASSED, THE HAPPIEST WEEKS OF MY LIFE. IT DIDN'T SEEM TO MATTER IN WHAT DRUDGERY I WAS ENGAGED, FOR MY THOUGHTS WERE ALWAYS ON THE HUNT.

ON ROGER AND THE HUNT, I MEAN.

FOR THE HUNT WAS AN EXCUSE FOR US TO BE TOGETHER WHEN THE STORMS OF CLASS AND WEALTH WERE ALWAYS TRYING TO REND US APART.

I MEAN.

I NEVER WANTED THOSE DAYS TO END.

BUT, SADLY, IF YOU KNOW ANYTHING, YOU KNOW NOTHING IS EVERLASTING.

JOAN!

JOAN DARLING, THE HUNT *MUST* END!

YOU MUST *MARRY* ME!

ROGER!

I SAW YOU WALKING, I WAS BEHIND YOU, LOOKING AT YOU, AND JOAN, I *CANNOT* DO IT ANYMORE!

I CANNOT *LIVE* THIS WAY IN MY OWN HOUSE! *HIDING* LIKE THE PHEASANTS IN THE FIELD! WAITING FOR THE DOGS TO COME!

I WAS IN HIS ARMS WHERE I HAD ALWAYS LONGED TO BE, AND IT WAS AGAIN LOVELY, AND YET I COULD FEEL NOTHING BUT FEAR.

WE CAN'T, MY LOVE...WE CAN'T...

DON'T, JOAN. I ***KNOW*** ALL THE POWERS GATHERED AGAINST US. BUT THEY DON'T KNOW MY POWER, THEY CAN'T UNDERSTAND MY STRENGTH.

OH, HOW HIS WORDS LIFTED ME, I BEGAN TO FEEL A DASH OF HOPE.

MY STRENGTH WHEN I AM WITH ***YOU.***

BUT THEN! AT THE DOOR! LORD WESTSHIRE!

MY ***WORD!*** WHAT IS THIS, ROGER?!

GET YOUR HANDS OFF THAT ***COMMON*** WOMAN!

FATHER! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND--

I UNDERSTAND ***PERFECTLY*** WELL! I WILL NOT HAVE SOME DALLIANCE BECOME A ***SCANDAL!***

THIS BEHAVIOR WILL ***NOT*** BE TOLERATED IN THIS HOUSE! YOU HAVE ***DUTIES*** TO THE NAME I GIFTED YOU, AND I WILL SEE THEM ***FULFILLED!***

FATHER, JOAN IS NOT A ***DALLIANCE!***

I ***LOVE*** HER!

SLAP

YOU YOUNG FOOL!

YOU HAVE ***NO*** IDEA WHAT LOVE IS!

ROGER LEFT AFTER THAT.

OR RATHER, HIS PARENTS SENT HIM AWAY TO LIVE WITH SOME COUSIN OR OTHER.

I EXPECTED TO BE LET GO, BUT THE FAMILY WAS DESPERATE TO HIDE ANY HINT OF IMPROPRIETY AND TO SQUASH EVERY RUMOR.

THE DISMISSAL OF THE MAID AT THE SAME TIME AS ROGER'S DEPARTURE COULD BE THE CAUSE OF A GREAT DEAL OF TALK.

AND A GREAT DEAL OF TALK WAS ALWAYS TO BE AVOIDED.

SO I RESUMED MY CHORES, CLEANING HILL HOUSE FOR ALL THE GOOD MEN AND WOMEN WHO LIVED THERE.

ALL OF THOSE RICH, WELLBORN PEOPLE WHO EXPECTED A WELL-KEPT HOUSE.

FOR THEM, I SCRUBBED AND I WASHED AND I FOLDED AND I DUSTED AND I...AND I...

AND I HEARD ROGER'S WORDS, AGAIN AND AGAIN.

"DARLING," HE SAID, "THE HUNT MUST END!"

MONTHS PASSED AND THEN THE DAY CAME, THE DAY I HAD BEEN WAITING FOR SINCE BEFORE I WAS BORN ON THIS GRAND ESTATE.

IT WASN'T MUCH, JUST AN EPISTLE DISCREETLY DELIVERED BY THE MILKMAID, JUST ONE MAGICAL SENTENCE IN THE MIDST OF HIS ORNATE PROCLAMATIONS OF LOVE.

"JOAN, ***DARLING,*** MEET ME IN OUR PLACE."

AS SOON AS I WAS ABLE, I RUSHED OUT TO THE HUNTING COTTAGE.

I COULD NOT BELIEVE IT WAS ALL HAPPENING. I HAD DREAMED THIS MOMENT WOULD COME, BUT DREAMS CAN BE SO FAR FROM WHAT IS REAL!

YET THERE IT ALL WAS, ALL LAID OUT FOR ME.

JOAN, MY ***BLOSSOM,*** FORGIVE ME, WHEN MY FATHER--

I WAS A ***COWARD,*** JOAN! I SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT, BUT I'VE ***RETURNED!*** I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT YOU! I WILL BE A COWARD NO LONGER!

MY CHANCE TO ESCAPE.

MARRY ME, JOAN! PLEASE, FORGET ALL THE TROUBLES WE'VE HAD OR WILL HAVE AND JUST REMEMBER YOU AND I-- YOU AND I FROM THE BEGINNING AND TO THE END!

MARRY ME, DARLING! ***MARRY ME!***

NO.

WHAT?

ROGER, DARLING, PLEASE, I WANT YOU TO LISTEN CLOSELY TO MY WORDS AND KNOW THAT I ***SINCERELY*** MEAN THEM.

I HAVE LIED TO YOU SO MANY TIMES, BUT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU KNOW, THAT ***EVERYONE*** KNOWS, WHAT I AM ABOUT TO SAY--THIS IS ***NOT*** A LIE.

JOAN, I DON'T... WHAT?

I WILL ***NEVER*** MARRY YOU. EVER. THERE IS NOTHING THAT CAN BE DONE TO CHANGE MY MIND, YOU UNDERSTAND THAT? NOTHING.

AND I NEVER LOVED YOU, POOR BOY. ***NEVER.*** NOT FOR A SINGLE MOMENT.

JOAN! YOU...YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE SAYING!

I AM SORRY, ROGER, I AM. DEEPLY.

AND NOT JUST FOR THE RUSE. BUT ALSO FOR...I'M JUST SO SORRY FOR EVERYTHING THAT...

FROM OUTSIDE, I HEAR THE CLICK, THE HAMMER BEING PULLED BACK ON HIS PISTOL.

THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG? WHAT IS ***WRONG*** WITH YOU?

OH ROGER. YOU POOR THING.

I AM USED TO IT BY NOW.

BANG

GUHH!

WITH ROGER BLEEDING BEHIND ME, I COCK THE SHOTGUN AND READY MY NERVES. IT HAS BEEN A LONG, ARDUOUS JOURNEY FROM CHILDHOOD TO HERE, BUT I EXPECTED NOTHING LESS ON...

THE HUNT FOR LOVE!

Chapter 3

WHAT... WHAT THE BLOODY @%@$ IS GOING ON?

SHUT THE *FUCK* UP, ROGER! YOU'RE ALREADY FUCKING DEAD!

LET ME WORRY ABOUT THE LIVING!

TOM KING
writer

ELSA CHARRETIER
artist

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
colorist

CLAYTON COWLES
letterer

FOLLOW THE PATTERN.

TEN TIMES OUT OF TEN, HE HITS ME ON THE FIRST SHOT.

AND IF I DON'T DIE RIGHT AWAY, HE CHECKS THE KILL AND SHOOTS AGAIN.

JUST WAIT. HAVE PATIENCE.

JOAN... I...I...AM HURT...

HE'S COMING.

ROGER! WHAT IS YOUR PROBLEM? SHUT THE FUCK UP.

SERIOUSLY.

HE'S COMING.

CREEEK

THE COWBOY'S HERE.

JOAN, DARLING... TELL MOTHER... TELL HER I LOVED...

I'M USED TO THE KICKBACK.

FUCK YOU!

BLAM

I KNOW I HAVE A SECOND SHOT.

YOU HEAR, COWBOY?! GO FUCK YOURSELF!

BLAM

I KNOW HOW TO LOAD IT.

YOU CAN FEEL WHAT IT'S LIKE TO BE FUCKING SHOT FOR ONCE! YOU WAKE UP SOME OTHER FUCKING PLACE, SOME OTHER FUCKING TIME!

CLICK

THANKS TO ROGER.

I CAN'T DIE, JOAN...I'M... I'M THE HEIR...THEY DEPEND ON...THE WHOLE VILLAGE... DEPENDS...

JOAN... I'M SO... WET...

GOOD AND KIND ROGER.

THAT'S ENOUGH.

IF YOU DON'T SHUT YOUR FUCKING MOUTH, ROGER, I'M GOING TO USE THIS GUN TO BLOW YOUR HEAD OFF YOUR BLOODY--

CHKKKCHKKK

HE SHOULD BE DEAD.

BLAM

THE COWBOY'S DEAD.

BLAM

I DID IT. AFTER ALL THESE LIVES.

BLAM

AND STILL, THE BULLETS RIP THROUGH ME.

BLAM

NO!

NNNNN...

JOAN!

HOWDY.

WHO'S HE?

JOAN? D-DARLING JOAN?

AH, HELL.

I...I...

SIR, I...I AM ROGER HENRY CHARLES ANGSTROM...THE...FUTURE... *ELEVENTH* LORD OF WEST... WESTSHIRE...

WHO...

PLEASURE TO MEET YOU, ROGER.

ANY FRIEND OF JOAN'S IS A FRIEND OF MINE. *HELL* OF A GIRL, THAT JOANIE, AIN'T SHE? SHE GROWS ON YOU FAST, I'LL SAY THAT.

WHAT... I DON'T... WHAT?

GIVE ME A SECOND HERE, ROGER, WON'T YOU?

I GOT A *MESSAGE* I GOT TO DELIVER TO JOAN, I DOUBT SHE'LL HEAR IT IN HER STATE, BUT I GAVE MY WORD TO A *GOOD* WOMAN AND I MEAN TO KEEP IT.

JOAN, YOU REMEMBER, DON'T YOU? LOVE IS--

JOAN! MY DARLING!

ROGER, NOW WHAT IN ALL *TARNATION* ARE YOU DOING THERE?

IF YOU SCREAM LIKE THAT, ALL *LOUD* LIKE, YOU THINK JOAN'S GOING TO HEAR A DAMN THING I HAVE TO SAY?

THIS IS *IMPORTANT,* BOY, KEEP YOUR LIPS TIED.

I MEAN, JESUS, ROGER. DON'T--

HEY, COWBOY... DIDN'T YOU HEAR...?

BLAM

THE HUNT'S DONE.

THERE.

NNNN...

WHAT...YOU'RE HURT...WE'RE... OH JOAN...OH GOD...

WHAT...WHAT HAS HAPPENED... I'M DYING...JOAN... WE'RE...DYING...

I THOUGHT...I CAME TO TELL YOU...WE SHOULD BE...I LOVE YOU...

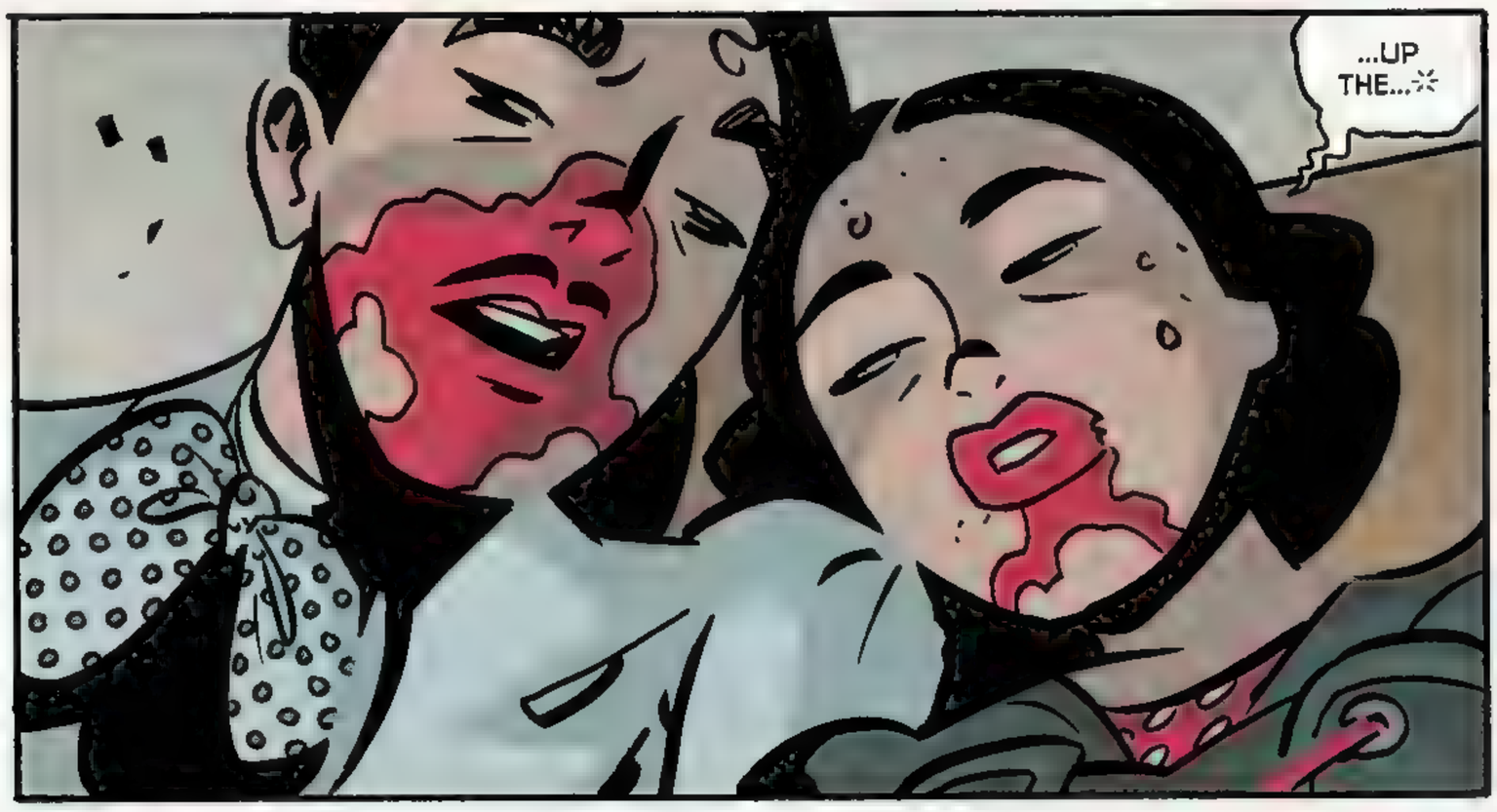
I LOVE... I LOVE YOU... JOAN...MY DARLING JOAN, I'VE ALWAYS... ALWAYS...

I... I...LOVE YOU...

ALL THAT... MATTERS...THIS ISN'T...

IT'S THAT WE...WE ARE... YOU AND...JOAN, DARLING...OUR... LOVE...

ONLY LOVE... MATTERS...



TO BE CONTINUED.

"TOO LATE FOR LOVE!"

OH, YOU *POOR* THING. YOU JUST HAVE TO *LEARN,* THERE'S A *BIGGER* WORLD OUT THERE. *HE* ISN'T *WORTH* YOUR TEARS!

WHAT DO *YOU* KNOW, YOU OLD *HAG?!* I WILL HAVE WHAT YOU *NEVER* DID! I WILL HAVE *LOVE!*

FROM SOMEWHERE FAR AWAY, I HEARD THE LIBRARIAN'S SHRILL SCOLDS. BUT HER CHEAP OBJECTIONS FADED QUICKLY AS I MELTED INTO FRED'S TOUCH. NOTHING SHE COULD SAY WOULD STOP ME! I WASN'T LIKE HER! I WOULDN'T BE...

TOO LATE FOR LOVE

CHAPTER 1

WHAT DO YOU KIDS THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

POOR OLD WOMAN! WE'RE JUST HAVING WHAT YOU WANT SO MUCH BUT CAN NEVER HAVE! *LOVE EVERLASTING!*

BOOK CLUB

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
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COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

TODAY WAS THE LAST DAY OF HIGH SCHOOL. I'D BE OFF TO CAMP A WEEK FROM NOW, AND THEN TO THE OTHER COAST FOR COLLEGE.

JOAN

WHICH IS TO SAY, IT WAS A VERY SPECIAL DAY IN ONE SENSE. BUT IN ANOTHER SENSE...

BILL! WHY DO I HAVE TO DO *EVERYTHING* AROUND HERE?!

...IT WAS JUST LIKE EVERY OTHER DAY.

YOU SAID YOU'D TAKE THE GARBAGE OUT *LAST* NIGHT! AND WHAT DO I COME DOWN TO TODAY?!

FOR GOODNESS' SAKES, I FELL *ASLEEP,* PATTIE, FORGIVE ME.

FELL ASLEEP?! IS THAT YOUR STORY?! WELL, THE BOTTLES LEFT IN THE TRASH YOU DIDN'T TAKE OUT SEEM TO TELL A *DIFFERENT* STORY!

PATTIE! YOU HAVE NO *DAMN* IDEA WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!

AND NO ONE EVEN NOTICED AS I LEFT.

FRED AND I HAD BEEN GOING STEADY FOR TWO MAGICAL YEARS.

HEY, *JOAN!* YOU LOOK SWELL TODAY! CAN I CARRY YOUR BOOKS?

FRED, YOU ASK EVERY DAY, HAVE I *EVER* SAID NO?

I LOVED HIM DEEPLY AND UTTERLY, I WON'T DENY IT.

THERE'S A PARTY BY SEMINAL LAKE AFTER SCHOOL, TO CELEBRATE THE END OF THE YEAR. MAYBE WE SHOULD GO *TOGETHER?*

THAT SOUNDS *KEEN!* BUT WHY DON'T WE MEET AT THE LIBRARY? I HAVE TO RETURN SOME OF MY BOOKS. I DON'T WANT THEM TO BE OVERDUE.

BUT I DIDN'T KNOW IF THAT LOVE WOULD LAST.

OKAY! I'LL PICK YOU UP AT THE LIBRARY AT FOUR! REMEMBER TO BRING YOUR BATHING SUIT!

I JUST GOT A *NEW* ONE, FRED! I THINK YOU'LL LOVE IT!

WHILE I AM GOING ACROSS THE COUNTRY IN THE FALL, FRED IS ATTENDING STATE JUST A FEW MILES FROM HERE.

ALL RIGHT, MY YOUNG GRADUATES, BEFORE YOU LEAVE MY CARE, SHOW ME YOU *LEARNED* SOMETHING: CAN ANYONE TELL ME THE LAST LINES OF VOLTAIRE'S *CANDIDE?*

YES, JOAN?

"WE MUST CULTIVATE OUR GARDEN."

VERY GOOD, JOAN! EXCELLENT AS ALWAYS.

THAT AFTERNOON, I RETURNED MY BOOKS AT THE LOCAL LIBRARY.

I'D LIKE TO RETURN THESE.

OF COURSE, BUT YOU'RE NOT TAKING ANY MORE OUT? THAT'S NOT LIKE YOU, JOAN.

TO BE HONEST, I WAS SHOCKED SHE KNEW MY NAME. SHE'D BEEN THE LIBRARIAN THERE EVER SINCE I WAS A LITTLE GIRL, BUT I NEVER LEARNED HERS.

OH, IT'S THE END OF THE YEAR AND I'M OFF SOON. I DON'T NEED TO TAKE ANYTHING WITH ME.

YOU'RE LEAVING IT ALL BEHIND? GOOD FOR *YOU*, DEAR. IT'S GOOD TO BE FREE.

WHAT DOES SHE MEAN BY *THAT?* "LEAVING IT ALL BEHIND." "GOOD TO BE FREE." SHE SAID IT AS IF SHE KNEW ABOUT *FRED!*

UNDAMENTALS
HIGH-SCHOOL
ATHEMATICS

WHAT DOES SHE KNOW ABOUT THAT?! SHE'S AN OLD ***SPINSTER!*** SHE'S NEVER KNOWN WHAT LOVE REALLY IS! WHAT IT MEANS TO LEAVE ***LOVE*** BEHIND!

MY PROBLEMS ARE ***MY*** PROBLEMS, NOT HERS! I DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M SO WORKED UP ABOUT!

OUTSIDE, I FOUND FRED WAITING FOR ME, AND ALL THOUGHTS OF THE OLD MAID AND HER PILES OF BOOKS FADED LIKE A DROP OF RAIN SINKING IN THE OCEAN.

HEY, BEAUTIFUL!

READY FOR A SWIM?!

FRED AND I WENT SWIMMING AS WE PLANNED AND WE HAD A MARVELOUS TIME, SPLASHING AND LAUGHING IN THE LAKE.

AND WHEN WE WERE DONE PLAYING, HE TOOK ME IN HIS ARMS AND THE CHILL OF THE WATER RAN UP MY SPINE AND MY WHOLE BODY SHOOK WITH HAPPINESS.

YOU'RE ***REALLY*** GOING TO LEAVE ALL THIS, JOAN, YOU'RE GOING TO LEAVE ***ME?***

AND FOR WHAT? SOME ***FANCY*** COLLEGE, SOME ***FANCY*** TOWN.

HOW CAN ***THAT*** BE MORE IMPORTANT THAN WHAT WE HAVE RIGHT HERE?!

MY PARENTS WERE MARRIED RIGHT OUT OF HIGH SCHOOL, ***LOOK*** AT THEM, FRED.

I ALWAYS VOWED TO ***NOT*** BE THEM, MY WHOLE LIFE I VOWED OVER AND OVER. YOU KNOW WHAT A ***VOW*** IS? IT'S A PROMISE YOU GIVE YOURSELF.

I CAN'T BRING MYSELF TO BREAK IT!

BUT WHAT ABOUT PEOPLE WHO ***AREN'T*** YOUR PARENTS, LIKE THAT OLD LIBRARIAN YOU ALWAYS TALK ABOUT, PEOPLE WHO NEVER FIND WHAT WE'VE FOUND?

DO YOU WANT TO END UP LIKE ***HER?*** STAMPING BOOKS INSTEAD OF BEING WITH SOMEONE YOU ***LOVE,*** SOMEONE WHO LOVES YOU BACK?

IS THAT WHAT YOU ***ACTUALLY*** WANT?

THAT NIGHT I DREAMED OF ONE FUTURE, ONE FULL OF HAPPINESS AND PROMISE AND LOVE.

DO YOU, JOAN ANDERSON, TAKE FRED LANDSTREE TO BE YOUR LAWFULLY WEDDED *HUSBAND?*

TO LOVE AND *OBEY,* IN BOTH SICKNESS AND IN HEALTH, FOR AS LONG AS YOU BOTH SHALL *LIVE?*

YES! I DO! I DO! I DO!

AND THEN I DREAMED OF ANOTHER. IT WASN'T FULL OF ANYTHING. IT WAS JUST EMPTY.

IT'S SATURDAY NIGHT! DO YOU HAVE ANY PLANS TONIGHT, MISS ANDERSON?

FRENCH IDIOMS

Geometry

American History

OH, YOU KNOW, I THINK I'LL GO *HOME* AND DO WHAT I DO *EVERY* NIGHT.

I'LL HAVE DINNER *BY MYSELF* AT MY TABLE. THEN I'LL FIND A BOOK TO READ *BY MYSELF.* AND THEN FALL ASLEEP *BY MYSELF* IN MY BIG BED.

IT'LL BE NICE AND QUIET. IT *ALWAYS* IS.

WHEN I WOKE, I SWEAR I COULD HEAR THE TICKING OF THE CLOCK AS THE TIME PASSED, AS I GOT NEARER AND NEARER TO LEAVING ONE LIFE TO FIND ANOTHER.

CLCK CLCK

IT TOOK ME A FEW SECONDS TO REALIZE THE NOISE WAS JUST PEBBLES CLINKING AT MY WINDOW, A CALL FROM THE STREET BELOW.

CLCK

CLCK

FRED! WHAT IN--WHAT ARE YOU *DOING?!*

DO YOU EVEN KNOW WHAT *TIME* IT IS?!

JOAN! I CAN'T TAKE IT *ANYMORE!* I CAN'T LET YOU LEAVE!

I *LOVE* YOU, JOAN! ALL THE WAY TO MY TOES! I *NEED* YOU TO BE WITH ME! TO STAY WITH ME! HERE!

JOAN ANDERSON! WILL YOU *MARRY* ME?!

I DIDN'T REPLY TO HIM. I STILL WASN'T QUITE READY TO GIVE UP ON MY VOW.

BUT I FELT HIS WORDS PULL AT ME, LIKE GRAVITY PULLED ON NEWTON'S APPLE.

THE NEXT DAY, AS THE RAIN KEPT POURING, I FOUND MYSELF HEADING BACK TO THE LIBRARY.

CANDIDE?

WE READ IT FOR SCHOOL.

ISN'T SCHOOL OVER?

ENGLISH

YES, YES IT IS. I DON'T KNOW *WHY* I PICKED IT UP AGAIN.

IT WAS ON MY MIND, I GUESS. MY MIND HAS BEEN JUST *EVERYWHERE* RECENTLY. BUT I DON'T THINK IT'S GETTING ANYWHERE.

CAN I ASK YOU SOMETHING? SOMETHING A LITTLE, I DON'T KNOW, *PERSONAL.*

YOU DON'T HAVE TO ANSWER IF YOU DON'T WANT TO. I DON'T WANT TO MAKE YOU UNCOMFORTABLE.

ASK ME ANYTHING YOU LIKE, DEAR.

I'M AS OPEN AS A BOOK.

ARE YOU... CAN YOU BE... WITH THE *LIFE* YOU HAVE...

I'M SORRY... BUT...

ARE YOU *HAPPY?*

IT WAS DECADES AGO, BUT IT FEELS LIKE YESTERDAY. BILL AND I WERE SWEETHEARTS FOR YEARS IN HIGH SCHOOL. HE WANTED TO MARRY ME, BUT I WANTED MORE THAN THE SMALL, SEDATE LIFE HE OFFERED. I KEPT TELLING HIM IT WAS...

TOO LATE FOR LOVE

CHAPTER 2

BILL! WHY LOVE WHAT YOU ***CAN'T*** HAVE?! I'M RIGHT ***HERE!*** I'M NOT GOING ***ANYWHERE!***

JOAN! DON'T ***LEAVE,*** I LOVE YOU! I CAN'T LIVE ***WITHOUT*** YOU!

LOVE! LOVE! LOVE! ALL THEY TALK ABOUT IS LOVE. THE WORLD IS ***BIGGER*** THAN THAT. IT ***HAS*** TO BE!

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

IT WAS MY LAST WEEK OF SCHOOL. I STILL REMEMBER THE COOL OF THE LAKE, THE WARMTH OF THE SUN ON MY FACE.

YOU LOOK *REALLY* HAPPY. WHAT ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?

BILL WAS THE MOST HANDSOME, MOST POPULAR KID IN SCHOOL.

MMM. I DON'T KNOW. NOTHING.

MAYBE CULTIVATING MY GARDEN.

QUARTERBACK OF THE FOOTBALL TEAM, STAR GUARD ON THE BASKETBALL TEAM, MVP SHORTSTOP ON THE BASEBALL TEAM...

REALLY? WELL, IF YOU'RE CULTIVATING A GARDEN...HERE'S SOME *WATER* FOR YOUR PLANTS!

BILL!

HE WAS THE PICK OF THE LITTER, AS THEY USED TO SAY.

AREN'T YOU GOING TO ASK ME WHAT *I'M* THINKING ABOUT?

NO. YOU'RE JUST GOING TO SAY "YOU."

AND HE PICKED ME.

I'M THINKING ABOUT *YOU!*

THEN YOU'RE A FOOL, ***BILL ANDERSON!*** EVERYONE KNOWS THAT ***SHE*** ONLY CARES ABOUT BOOKS AND MAPS AND SCHOOL AND NOT ABOUT ***ANYONE*** ELSE!

PATTIE PANZA, LIKE BILL, WAS VERY POPULAR, THE HEAD OF THE CHEER SQUAD AND A DOZEN OTHER SCHOOL CLUBS.

AND SHE ***CERTAINLY*** DOESN'T CARE ABOUT ***YOU!*** NOT THE WAY ***I*** DO!

EVERYONE SAID PATTIE AND BILL WERE DESTINED FOR ONE ANOTHER.

WHO EVEN INVITED YOU, ***PATTIE?!*** THIS IS A PRIVATE PARTY!

IT WAS JUST SOMETHING THAT SEEMED OBVIOUS TO EVERYBODY.

THIS IS A PUBLIC LAKE! I CAN BE HERE IF I WANT TO! UNLIKE ***HER,*** I ACTUALLY ***LIKE*** BEING AROUND YOU! I ACTUALLY ***ENJOY*** YOU!

THIS IS ***ENJOYING*** ME?! COMING HERE AND YELLING YOUR ***HEAD*** OFF?! INTERRUPTING ME?!

THEY WERE BORN TO BE QUEEN AND KING OF OUR SMALL TOWN.

SHE'S JUST PLAYING ***GAMES*** WITH YOU, BILL!! WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT?!

I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT YOU'RE ***TALKING*** ABOUT!

WAIT, DID YOU SAY...BILL? AND *PATTIE...*

MOTHER AND FATHER?

YOU HAVE *HER* DARK EYES, NOT HIS BRIGHT BABY BLUES.

SOMETIMES I LOOK UP AT THE SKY AND I *SHOULD* BE SEEING ALL THE INFINITY OF HEAVEN, BUT I FIND MYSELF...

...JUST LOOKING BACK INTO THE EYES OF YOUNG BILL ANDERSON.

SHE'S RIGHT, YOU KNOW, *SHE* LOVES YOU AND YOU ARE *PERFECT* FOR EACH OTHER.

YOU BOTH WANT TO LIVE *HERE,* RAISE A FAMILY HERE. AND I...WELL...I...

IT'S JUST YOU AND PATTIE, IT'S MEANT TO BE.

YOU'RE RIGHT, THAT'S WHAT I WANT, WHAT I'VE *ALWAYS* WANTED. TO BE HERE.

BUT I THINK, JOAN, IF YOU SEARCH YOUR HEART, YOU'LL SEE THAT'S WHAT *YOU* WANT TOO.

THIS TOWN IS WHERE WE GREW UP, WHERE I MET YOU. THIS FIELD, MAIN STREET, EDMOND'S GROCERY, CAMINO'S ICE CREAM, IT'S HOME. IT'S WHERE WE *BELONG.*

I'M GOING TO LIVE MY LIFE RIGHT *HERE,* AND I'M GOING TO LIVE IT WITH YOU!

MARRY ME, JOAN!

MY FATHER! HE ASKED--HE *PROPOSED?!*

TO *YOU?!*

IT WAS ALL A LONG TIME AGO. NOTHING TO FRET OVER.

SIT *DOWN,* JOAN.

MY MOTHER, MY FATHER--THEY NEVER, THEY NEVER SEEMED TO BE IN *LOVE.* NOT LIKE FRED AND I ARE...

I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT WAS BECAUSE...THAT'S JUST HOW *ALL* LOVE ENDED.

BUT MAYBE... MAYBE THERE'S *SOMETHING* ELSE, MAYBE...

PLEASE. SIT DOWN, JOAN.

MY STORY'S NOT *QUITE* DONE.

Geometry

Geometry

I DON'T KNOW... IT'S...

WHY IS EVERYTHING LIKE THIS?

AFTER YOUR FATHER ASKED ME--WELL, I DON'T KNOW IF ASKED IS THE RIGHT WORD--AFTER HE **SAID** WE NEEDED TO GET MARRIED.

I CAME HERE, TO THIS VERY LIBRARY.

YOU SEE, I WAS LIKE YOU, I LIVED IN BOOKS AND DREAMED THEIR DREAMS.

I KNEW THERE WAS A WORLD OUT THERE BEYOND ONE STREET AND A LAKE.

AND A BOY.

BUT JUST AS MUCH AS I KNEW **THAT** WAS TRUE, I KNEW IT WAS TRUE THAT I LOVED YOUR FATHER, DEEPLY AND UTTERLY.

VOLTA

CAND

or the op

THAT MY LIFE WOULD ALWAYS BE INCOMPLETE WITHOUT HIM IN IT.

JOAN, ***TELL*** ME! YOU HAVE AN ANSWER, MAKE ME THE ***HAPPIEST*** MAN IN THE WORLD!

OH, BILL, I WISH I ***COULD.*** I LONG TO WALK WITH YOU AND HOLD YOUR HAND FOR THE REST OF MY ***LIFE.***

TO KISS YOU, TO MAKE ***LOVE*** TO YOU, TO HAVE CHILDREN WITH YOU...

BUT...I KNOW...

EVEN IF I...IT CAN ***NEVER*** BE...

I ***CAN'T*** MARRY YOU, BILL.

I'M SORRY. PLEASE...I'M SO SORRY...

I LEFT.

LEAVIN

TOWN L

Come a

I WENT EVERYWHERE IN AMERICA-- NEW YORK, WASHINGTON, ATLANTA, LOS ANGELES.

I'D STAY AT A JOB TWO OR THREE MONTHS AND THEN MOVE ON TO SOMEWHERE NEW.

WHEN I FELT I HAD GONE FAR ENOUGH IN THIS COUNTRY, I WENT A LITTLE FARTHER.

I SAILED OCEANS.

PARIS, ROME, CAIRO, BEIJING, TOKYO, AND A DOZEN OTHERS. PROBABLY MORE THAN A DOZEN.

I WOULD FIND A SPACE TO BE MYSELF AND ENJOY MYSELF.

AND JUST BEFORE I GOT FULLY SETTLED, COMFORTABLE ENOUGH THAT IT WOULD BE HARD TO LEAVE, I WOULD MOVE ON.

CAFÉ DE LA PAIX

THEN ONE DAY, WITH NO THOUGHT AT ALL, I BOARDED A PLANE AND HEADED BACK HOME.

IT WAS NOTHING MORE THAN THAT. I WENT TO SLEEP IN MY OWN BED SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD AND WOKE UP ON A PLANE HEADING WEST.

LIKE THERE WAS A STRING ATTACHED TO ME AND SOMEONE HAD BEEN PULLING ON IT THE WHOLE TIME I WAS GONE.

AND AFTER ALL THOSE YEARS, ALL THAT TRAVEL, I WAS JUST TOO TIRED...I...I... COULDN'T PULL BACK ANYMORE. I DIDN'T HAVE THE STRENGTH.

AND I GAVE IN.

I FOUND MYSELF BACK WITH MY BOOKS. ALL THOSE DREAMS I HAD READ AND LIVED NOW SURROUNDING ME AS I GREW OLDER.

IT'S SUCH A SMALL TOWN, AND THE INEVITABLE EVENTUALLY CAME TO BE.

DO I HAVE TO SPELL IT OUT *AGAIN?!* MAYBE IF YOU WERE HOME MORE INSTEAD OF--

MY GOODNESS! IT'S *YOU!*

JOAN! YOU... YOU CAME BACK! WHERE HAVE YOU *BEEN?* I WROTE TO THE ADDRESS YOUR PARENTS GAVE ME AND--

OH, IT'S *WONDERFUL* TO SEE YOU AGAIN!

BILL, PLEASE--

YOU REMEMBER *PATTIE,* RIGHT? WE--

AND THIS IS MY DAUGHTER...SHE'S NINE NOW... SHE'S...

OH, JUST TELL HER, YOU *COWARD.* TELL HER WHAT YOU MADE ME DO TO OUR FAMILY.

HER NAME WAS JOAN, HE SAID.

HIS DAUGHTER-- HIS LOVELY, KIND DAUGHTER WHO HAD HIS WIFE'S EYES.

HE'D NAMED HER AFTER ME.

I FELT HIS STRONG, MASCULINE ARMS AROUND ME, TUGGING ME CLOSER. THIS. THIS WAS MY TRUE HOME--NOT THE THRILL OF AN ADVENTURE, BUT THE GROWING CALM INSIDE ME THAT CAME WITH KNOWING I HADN'T MADE A MISTAKE, THAT I REALLY WASN'T...

TOO LATE FOR LOVE

CHAPTER 3

FRED! I'VE MADE MY CHOICE! I CHOOSE *YOU!* MY DARLING! *ONLY* YOU!

THEY'RE *PERFECT* FOR EACH OTHER. IT'S THE HAPPY ENDING *EVERYONE* DESERVES. BUT WHY--WHILE HE'S EMBRACING HER-- WHY IS HE STARING AT *ME?!*

DRAMA CLUB!

VOTE KINSLE

WINTER DANCE

AMERICA'S STORY

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

I DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. MY WHOLE LIFE SEEMED LIKE IT WAS A HOUSE BUILT ON SNOW AND THE SUN HAD JUST COME OUT AND EVERYTHING WAS MELTING, EVERYTHING WAS BEGINNING TO SLIP AWAY.

WHAT DID I WANT? WHAT HAD I GIVEN UP? WAS I LOST? WAS I FOUND?

A THOUSAND QUESTIONS SHOT THROUGH ME, AND AS SOON AS I TRIED TO ANSWER ONE, ANOTHER CAME CRASHING THROUGH.

AND JUST WHEN THE CLOUD OF MY MIND HAD BECOME TOO THICK TO NAVIGATE, I LOOKED THROUGH MY TEARS AND SAW...

FRED!

JOAN?

I WAS WAITING AND I *COULDN'T* WAIT ANYMORE, SO I CAME LOOKING FOR YOU, I KNOW YOU LIKE THE LIBRARY AND I JUST...

I NEED TO HEAR--

OH, FRED!

I'VE BEEN A ***FOOL!*** THE LIBRARIAN, SHE EXPLAINED, MY PARENTS WERE NEVER REALLY IN LOVE! MY FATHER WAS IN LOVE WITH ***HER*** AND SHE RAN AWAY!

MY FATHER IS ANGRY BECAUSE HE ***LOST*** LOVE, NOT BECAUSE HE ***FOUND*** IT! HE EVEN NAMED ME AFTER HER, NAMED ME ***JOAN!***

FRED, I'VE BEEN TRYING ***SO*** HARD NOT TO BE MY PARENTS BY RUNNING AWAY FROM LOVE.

BUT IT WAS SOMEONE RUNNING ***AWAY*** FROM LOVE THAT MADE MY PARENTS WHO ***THEY*** ARE!

DOES... DOES THAT MEAN...

YES, FRED, THE ANSWER IS ***YES!***

I'M NOT GOING ANYWHERE! I'M STAYING ***HERE!*** WITH YOU! THIS IS WHERE WE WILL LIVE! THIS IS WHERE WE WILL BUILD ***OUR*** FAMILY!

Cougars

JOAN! I CAN'T ***TELL*** YOU WHAT YOUR WORDS MEAN! THIS IS SO ***AMAZING!***

JUST KISS ME, MY LOVE, ***KISS*** ME AND SHOW ME THAT WE'RE YOUNG, THAT THE FUTURE IS AHEAD OF US, THAT IT'S NOT TOO LATE FOR--

AT THAT MOMENT, AS HIS LIPS MET MINE, EVERY CONFUSED THOUGHT I'D HAD CRYSTALIZED INTO ONE PURE PHILOSOPHY--

*WHEREVER I AM, **THERE** IS MY GARDEN!*

I GUESS ALL THAT'S LEFT IS A ***LIFETIME*** OF HAPPINESS.

SHOULD WE GET STARTED?

YES! *HAHAHA,* I'M READY NOW, LET'S--

OH NO! WITH ALL THE RAIN, I WAS WEARING MY ***SCARF.*** THEN I GOT ALL BEFUDDLED AND I LEFT IT IN THE LIBRARY.

JUST GIVE ME ***ONE*** SECOND...

NO ***WAY!*** YOU'VE SPENT ENOUGH TIME IN THERE WITH THOSE ***BOOKS*** AND THAT ***WOMAN!***

I'LL GO GET YOUR SCARF! AND ***YOU*** RUSH HOME AND TELL YOUR PARENTS THE GOOD NEWS!

I DON'T WANT YOU STANDING OUT HERE AND CATCHING PNEUMONIA.

OKAY, MY LOVE, MY... MY...***FIANCÉ!***

I HATE TO INTERRUPT THEIR LATEST QUARREL, BUT I'LL TELL THEM! MAYBE REMEMBERING THAT TRUE LOVE IS STILL OUT THERE WILL ***HELP*** THEM!

I'LL SEE YOU SOON, FRED! IT WON'T BE LONG, BUT I'LL ***MISS*** YOU!

HAHAHA. I'LL SEE YOU, JOAN! DON'T WORRY, I WON'T BE TOO LATE!

TOCH
LIBRARY

YES, DEAR, CAN I HELP YOU?

NO, NO, I'M GOOD.

I'M JUST HERE ROOTING ABOUT FOR SOMETHING LOST.

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, THIS IS ACTUALLY MY FIRST TIME IN THIS PLACE. NEVER REALLY TOOK TO READING STORIES, NEVER SAW THE USE FOR IT.

SEEMS LIKE THERE'S ENOUGH IN LIFE, YOU DON'T HAVE TO GO LOOKING FOR IT ELSEWHERE.

HM, I DON'T KNOW ABOUT THAT, YOUNG MAN.

JUST SAYING, I DON'T NEED NO ROMEO AND JULIET.

NOT WHEN THE WORLD HERE'S GOT BILL ANDERSON AND ***JOAN PETERSON.***

EXCUSE...

...ME...?

BEEN A WHILE, JOAN.

MAYBE TOO LONG.

FUCK.

WON'T LIE TO YOU, GETTING SHOT IN THE FACE SET ME *BACK,* BY THE TIME I CAUGHT UP WITH YOU, YOU'D ALREADY TAKEN THE BUS OUT OF TOWN.

I SPENT A LOT OF YEARS LOOKING FOR YOU. CITY TO CITY. COUNTRY TO COUNTRY. COULDN'T YOU STAY STILL A WHILE, GIRL?

HAVE SOME PITY ON AN OLD COWBOY?

YOU DON'T LOOK TOO OLD TO ME.

YOU'D BE SURPRISED AT HOW FAR BACK I GO.

YOU'D BE SHOCKED.

JESUS...

WHAT IS THIS? WHAT'S THE POINT OF IT? I RUN I'M FUCKED, I STAY I'M FUCKED, I FIGHT I'M FUCKED, I LIE DOWN WITH MY FUCKING BELLY IN THE AIR, I'M FUCKED!

ARE YOU *REAL?* AM *I?*

I DON'T FUCKING UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS *IS!*

AFTER ALL THAT TRAVEL, I FINALLY LOST TRACK OF YOU SOMEWHERE NEAR BAGHDAD.

FOR A WHILE I WAS JUST WANDERING, LOOKING AND LOOKING.

THEN ONE DAY, IT HIT ME. WHY AM I LOOKING? WHY DON'T I JUST HAVE A COLD BEER AND ENJOY THE SUN ON MY FACE AND THE DIRT ON MY BOOTS?

WHAT THE HELL WAS WRONG WITH ME?

AND RIGHT THEN I KNEW WHERE YOU WERE, IT WAS JUST A MATTER OF TIME.

IT'S NOT JUST WORDS, IS IT?

I HAD TO GET YOU, AND YOU HAD TO COME BACK.

LOVE *IS* EVERLASTING.

TO BE CONTINUED.

4

OH, *DANE,* CAN'T YOU *SEE?!* THE ONLY WAY TO ESCAPE *DEATH* IS THROUGH *LOVE!*

IN THE MIDST OF THE WAR TO END ALL WARS...A LOVE TO END ALL LOVES!

NOTHING LEFT BUT LOVE

ANOTHER DAY, ANOTHER SOLDIER, ANOTHER SONG. FAR FROM HOME, I CROONED INTO THE DARKNESS WHILE IN THE DISTANCE, THE GUNS OF THE FRONTLINES TRIED THEIR OWN RHYTHM. IT SEEMED IN SOME WAYS LIKE THE WORLD WAS ENDING, AS IF SOON THERE WOULD BE

NOTHING LEFT BUT LOVE

I KNOW *THAT* LOOK, I'VE SEEN IT ON A THOUSAND FACES. HE THINKS HE'S IN *LOVE.* THE POOR SWEET THING; LITTLE DOES HE KNOW WHAT'S *REALLY* COMING!

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

1915. A FEW MILES FROM THE TRENCHES.

I HAVE GATHERED MY HEART AS A ROSE; AS A ROSE FROM THE MIDSUMMER GARDEN.

AND MY LOVE AT THE HEART OF IT GLOWS; AND ITS BREATH IS A PRAYER FOR YOUR PARDON.

I CAME TO FRANCE TWO YEARS AGO TO STUDY MUSIC. I WANTED TO SING OPERA. TO BE THE NEXT CELEBRATED SOPRANO.

LOVE HERE IS MY HEART; ONE ROSE FOR YOUR HAIR.

YOURS IF YOU KEEP IT TODAY; YOURS IF YOU THROW IT AWAY.

THEN CAME THE WAR--AND THE GREAT OPERA HOUSES SHUT THEIR DOORS. I RAN OUT OF MONEY AFTER A FEW WEEKS.

WHERE ARE YOU NOW, TEAR IT APART; OR CHOOSE IT TO WEAR...

SOMETHING TO KEEP OR TO KILL; AS YOU WILL... HERE IS MY HEART.

RATHER THAN RUN HOME, I FOUND A JOB SINGING FOR SOLDIERS ON LEAVE FROM THE FRONT.

I HAVE SPOKEN MY HEART IN A SONG.

IN A SONG OF A NIGHTINGALE DREAMING...

EVERY EVENING A NEW BATCH COMES IN. THEY DRINK, THEY LAUGH...

FOR HE SANG TO ME ALL THE NIGHT LONG.

HEAR MY HEART WITH A...

THEY FALL IN LOVE.

WHOEVER YOU ARE, I LOVE YOU.

AFTER MY SET, AS I DO EVERY NIGHT, I WENT TO THE BAR FOR A DRINK.

BONJOUR. UH, ÇA VA BIEN?

THE BOSS PAYS ME EXTRA TO SIT THERE AND TALK TO THE MEN.

NO NEED FOR THE ***FANCY.*** JUST LIGHT MY CIGARETTE.

YOU SPEAK ***ENGLISH?*** ARE YOU AMERICAN? THAT'S BRILLIANT. MY FRENCH IS MISERABLE.

IT'S GOOD MONEY AND IT'S ONLY TALK.

I ALWAYS WANTED TO GO TO ***AMERICA.***

MAYBE AFTER THE WAR, THEY SAY IT WON'T BE A ***LONG*** ONE.

DO THEY?

MY NAME IS ***DANE,*** MYSELF AND MY MATES OVER THERE, WE'RE OUT OF THE SAME TOWN, ALL JOINED UP TOGETHER SO WE COULD SERVE IN THE SAME COMPANY.

JUST GOT OUT HERE, FRESH FROM TRAINING, FIRST TIME IN ***FRANCE.*** IT'S QUITE SOMETHING.

HAVE ***YOU*** BEEN HERE LONG?

I WOULDN'T SAY ***LONG,*** NO.

WELL, ***I*** JUST HAVE TO SAY, YOU'RE, WELL, THE LOVELIEST GIRL I'VE ***EVER*** SEEN. I DON'T KNOW WHAT I EXPECTED OUT HERE, BUT I CERTAINLY DIDN'T EXPECT ***YOU.***

I MEAN... I'M SORRY FOR BEING SO ***BOLD...*** I JUST...YOU'VE TAKEN MY BREATH IS ALL. I CAN'T BREATHE.

THOSE ARE YOUR FRIENDS?

OH, YES, THAT'S CHRISTOPHER, DARREN, GIL, RAPHAEL, AND JAMES. WE JUST GRADUATED SCHOOL A YEAR BACK.

BETTER GROUP OF BLOKES YOU WON'T FIND. ***THEY*** WERE THE ONES WHO SAID I HAD TO COME AND TALK TO YOU.

WHY DO YOU HAVE TO COME AND TALK TO ME, DANE?

WELL, YES, ***THAT.*** WELL, TO PUT IT RATHER FRANKLY, I'M IN ***LOVE.***

I KNOW, HOW DO I ***KNOW*** I LOVE YOU, IT'S ABSURD. BUT IT'S JUST LIKE YOU KNOW THE SUN WILL WARM YOU AND THE RAIN WILL MAKE YOU WET.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT TO LEARN THESE THINGS, IT'S JUST THE WAY THINGS ***ARE.*** I LOVE YOU.

WHEN DO YOU GO UP?

IN THE MORNING. THEY SAID THE TRADITION IS NOT TO SLEEP THE NIGHT BEFORE. YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO GET ***PLENTY*** OF SLEEP IN THE TRENCH.

A LOT OF WAITING AROUND WITH NOT MUCH TO DO, I HEAR.

BUY YOURSELF A DRINK, THEN BUY ME ONE.

HAPPILY.

BUT JOAN...I... I SHOULD TELL YOU... I ***DON'T*** DRINK.

WE TALKED A BIT, I WENT BACK TO MY WORK. I DIDN'T SEE HIM AGAIN UNTIL MAYBE THREE MONTHS LATER.

HELLO.

HOW HAVE YOU BEEN, JOAN?

I DON'T SUPPOSE YOU ***REMEMBER*** ME. NO... I EXPECT NOT. I WAS IN HERE SOME TIME AGO, BEFORE WE WENT OFF.

MY NAME IS DANE MOORHOUSE. I'M THE ***FOOL*** WHO TOLD YOU HE LOVED YOU.

LOT OF FOOLS TELL ME THEY LOVE ME.

WELL, YES, I IMAGINE THAT'S ***QUITE*** TRUE.

THOUGH I ALSO IMAGINE ***MOST*** DON'T MEAN IT.

SO AT LEAST I HAVE THAT ON ***THEM.*** WHICH IS SOMETHING.

I REMEMBER YOU, DANE.

I THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T ***DRINK.***

I DIDN'T. OR I DON'T.

BUT MY... *UHM*...MY FRIEND, JAMES...I DON'T KNOW IF YOU REMEMBER... HE WAS HERE WITH ME ***LAST*** TIME. AT THE TABLE.

WELL, HE WAS QUITE THE ***DRUNKARD,*** TO BE HONEST, VOCAL IN HIS ADVOCACY OF IT, AND I'D ***PROMISED*** HIM I'D RAISE A GLASS IF HE EVER...

...AND, *UHM,* A FEW WEEKS BACK, HE ***DID.***

BIT OF BAD LUCK. GOT CAUGHT ON THE WIRE. TOOK SOME... WELL, IT'S NOT ***REALLY*** ALL THAT IMPORTANT. HAPPENS EVERY DAY, REALLY.

BUT HERE ***WE*** ARE. THE FOUR OF US, BACK HERE. FOR JAMES.

FOR JAMES.

INDEED.

OH MY LORD, HOW DO YOU STAND THIS STUFF?! IS IT SUPPOSED TO BE SO ***THICK...?*** I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WOULD BE SWEET.

WHY DID I THINK THAT?

HAHA HAHAHA HA

AFTER A FEW MORE LAUGHS, SWEET DANE WENT BACK TO HIS TABLE AND I DID MY SECOND SET OF THE NIGHT.

ONCE IN THE DEAR DEAD DAYS BEYOND RECALL;

WHEN ON THE WORLD THE MISTS BEGAN TO FALL,

AS USUAL, I WANDERED THE FLOOR, GAVE EVERY SOLDIER THE LOOK THEY DRANK FOR.

OUT OF THE DREAMS THAT ROSE IN HAPPY THRONG.

LOW TO OUR HEARTS LOVE SANG AN OLD SWEET SONG;

EVENTUALLY, I CAME TO DANE.

AND IN THE DUSK WHERE FELL THE FIRELIGHT GLEAM.

SOFTLY IT WOVE ITSELF INTO OUR DREAM.

THERE WAS SOMETHING IN HIS FACE.

JUST A SONG AT TWILIGHT WHEN THE LIGHTS ARE LOW,

SOMETHING WARM AND KIND.

THOUGH THE HEART BE WEARY, SAD THE DAY AND LONG,

STILL TO US AT TWILIGHT COMES LOVE'S OLD SONG.

COMES LOVE'S OLD...SWEET... SONG...

AND THE FLICKERING SHADOWS SOFTLY COME AND GO.

I'D MADE A LOT OF RULES FOR MYSELF IN FRANCE.

ONE OF THEM WAS TO NOT KISS THE SOLDIERS.

YOU SEE, A KISS CAN LAST A LIFETIME.

I LOVE YOU...I LOVE YOU...

OH, JOAN...

AND A SOLDIER IS ONLY FOR TODAY.

JOAN?

EVEN TODAY WE HEAR LOVE'S SONG OF YORE.

DEEP IN OUR HEARTS IT DWELLS, FOREVERMORE...

ALMOST SEVEN MONTHS LATER, I WAS PUTTING ON MY FACE, (THEY DON'T HAVE A DRESSING ROOM AND I HAVE TO DO IT AT THE BAR) WHEN I HEARD A FAMILIAR VOICE.

YOU DON'T NEED ANY OF THAT, YOU KNOW. YOU'RE ALREADY RATHER ***PERFECT.***

DANE!

HELLO, LOVELY GIRL. WHAT'S NEW?

YOU'RE ***BACK!*** YOU STOPPED WRITING A FEW MONTHS AGO AFTER BEING SO ***REGULAR,*** I THOUGHT...

OH, IT'S A ***JOY*** TO SEE YOU!

IT'S NICE TO BE BACK, JOAN, I'M SORRY ABOUT NOT WRITING, IT'S BEEN... THERE WERE...

WELL, CHRISTOPHER IS DEAD. THAT'S WHY WE'RE ***HERE,*** THE THREE OF US...THAT ARE LEFT.

IT'S A ***TRADITION*** NOW, ISN'T IT? ONE MUST HONOR THE...IT'S TRADITION.

OH, NO.

I'M ***SO*** SORRY.

NOTHING TO BE SORRY *ABOUT,* DON'T WORRY YOURSELF. IT'S NOT WORTH IT.

IT'S *WAR.*

IT'S ALL *NATURAL.*

ISN'T IT?

DANE...

NO, LET ME TALK, I...WELL, *JOAN,* I HAVE SOMETHING IMPORTANT TO SAY. YES.

I HAVE BEEN...I HAVE SEEN... I'M NOT *CERTAIN* WHAT IS COMING NEXT. I CAN'T BE, NO ONE CAN.

SOMETIMES YOU'RE IN THE TRENCH AND SOMETIMES YOU'RE *NOT.* THAT'S ALL. ALL OF LIFE IS WHETHER YOU'RE IN OR OUT.

AND RIGHT NOW...I'M *OUT...*AREN'T I? AND...AND I'M HERE WITH YOU AND THERE ARE NO *BULLETS* AND LICE AND MUD...AND...THE SUN IS WARM AND THE RAIN IS WET.

AND WHO KNOWS... WHO THE *HELL* HONESTLY KNOWS?

JOAN, TODAY, TONIGHT, NOW... JOAN...

WILL YOU MARRY ME?

AND THERE IT WAS.

THERE IT ALWAYS IS.

AND I KNEW EXACTLY WHAT I WAS SUPPOSED TO SAY:

DANE, THAT'S ***VERY*** SWEET. I'VE...IT'S BEAUTIFUL HEARING IT FROM YOU.

I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW MUCH IT MEANS. I DON'T THINK YOU-- I DON'T BELIEVE ***ANYONE*** WOULD REALLY UNDERSTAND. SOMETIMES I DON'T.

"I LOVE YOU, DANE, TODAY AND FOREVER!"

BUT, ***NO.*** NO, I CAN'T. I'M SORRY.

"YES, MY DARLING! YES! LET'S GET MARRIED! LET'S FIND A WAY IN THE MIDST OF ALL THAT IS TRAGIC TO BE HAPPY, TO BE LOVED."

AH.

I ***SEE.***

YES.

HE LEFT AND WENT BACK TO HIS TABLE. WE DIDN'T SPEAK FOR THE REST OF THE NIGHT.

A FEW MONTHS MORE PASSED AWAY BEFORE I SAW HIM AGAIN.

TO RAPHAEL, THE BASTARD!

BACK WITH HIS FRIENDS. ANOTHER ONE GONE.

HEY, THAT'S *HER,* RIGHT, COMING OUT NOW?

THE ONE YOU'RE ALWAYS ON ABOUT. SHE'S A *LOOKER,* ALL RIGHT, YOU GOT AN EYE ON YOU. THAT'S WHY THE BULLETS DON'T HIT YOU, YOU GOT YOUR EYES OPEN.

BE QUIET, YOU'RE DRUNK.

DRUNK?! *ME?!* HARDLY! I'M *ALIVE* IS WHAT I AM, *EH?* NOT LIKE RAF, NOT LIKE THE REST OF THEM!

AND SO ARE *YOU,* COME TO THINK OF IT NOW!

SO STOP WASTING YOUR TIME *BLABBERING* WITH ME AND GO AND *TAKE* HER!

WE'RE IN A WAR. SHE'S ON STAGE.

TAKE HER WHERE?

HOW SHOULD I *BLOODY* WELL KNOW?!

I'M DRUNK AS A SKUNK!

BE *QUIET,* YOU LOUD @$@$.

SHE'S STARTING.

I WANDER ON AS IN A DREAM; MY GOAL A PARADISE MUST BE

FOR THERE AN ANGEL WAITS 'TWOULD SEEM, YET LO MY DEAR HEART TIS ONLY THEE.

SUNS MAY SHINE TO LIGHT MY WAY DEAR; WEALTH BE MINE FOR AYE DEAR.

QUEENS MAY PLEDGE THEIR RICHES TOO. YET THE WORLD WOULD STILL BE LONELY WITH SUCH VIRTUES ONLY.

LIFE TO ME, DEAR, MEANS JUST YOU...

I CARE NOT FOR THE SUN TO SHINE, I DARE NOT HOPE TO ER'E BE MINE,

I ONLY KNOW I LOVE YOU.

LOVE ME AND THE WORLD IS MINE...

NO!

I *CAN'T*... I'M SORRY... I...

I...I... I'M SORRY. I APOLOGIZE...

DANE!

WAIT! LET ME TALK TO YOU...

NO, DON'T... EVERYONE JUST *LEAVE* ME...

IT'S *FINE*... I'M SORRY...

DANE!

LET HIM GO, GIRL.

HE'S A *PRIDEFUL* BOY. HE DOESN'T WANT YOU TO SEE THAT.

SEE WHAT--WHAT ARE YOU *TALKING* ABOUT?

HIM AND RAF WERE OUT TOGETHER ON A PATROL IN NO MAN'S LAND. RAF GOT HIT, *INJURED* IN THE MUD, TOO INJURED TO MOVE.

DANE STAYED WITH HIM, HE DID, UNTIL MORNING, *TRYING* TO KEEP HIM QUIET, HOPING FOR A MIRACLE, I DON'T KNOW.

WHEN MORNING CAME, RAF WAS DEAD AND DANE HAD TO *PLAY* DEAD TOO OR ELSE A SNIPER'D TAKE HIM. LAID NEXT TO HIM *ALL* DAY IN THE MUD.

WAITING FOR NIGHT TO COME.

BUT WITH NIGHT, HE *DIDN'T* MOVE, I DON'T KNOW, HE WON'T SAY WHY.

HE STAYED FOR *THREE* DAYS LIKE THAT, TUCKED INTO DEAD RAF UNTIL I MYSELF WENT OUT AND DRAGGED HIM BACK TO THE TRENCH.

NOW HE'S GOT A FEW *SPELLS* COMING AND GOING, NOTHING SERIOUS, DON'T WORRY YOURSELF ABOUT IT.

JUST GIVE HIM A MOMENT, DEAR.

IT'S NOT *LOVE* HE'S CRYING OVER.

ALMOST A YEAR WENT BY BEFORE I SAW HIM AGAIN. A YEAR OF A SONGS SUNG AND FORGOTTEN AS THE MEN FILED THROUGH.

LOVE HERE IS MY HEART... ONE...ONE **ROSE** FOR YOUR HAIR...

YOURS IF YOU KEEP IT **TODAY**...YOURS IF... IF YOU **THROW** IT...

...AWAY... AWAY...

NO NEED FOR THE ***FANCY.*** JUST LIGHT MY CIGARETTE.

JOAN!

LOOK AT ***YOU!*** LOOK HOW ***LOVELY*** YOU ARE! GOD! HOW DO YOU STAY LIKE THAT?! EVERYTHING ELSE GETS... WELL, THEY DO, DON'T THEY?

A ***LIGHT,*** DANE?

RIGHT, SORRY, JUST...GIVE ME A MOMENT HERE...I GOT A ***MATCH*** HERE, *UH...*

AND HAVE A SEAT...THERE'S... THERE'S ***PLENTY*** OF ROOM.

THANK YOU.

DON'T THANK ***ME...*** THANK... THERE'S JUST ROOM NOW... SO MUCH ROOM...ROOM FOR ***EVERYONE*** TO...

GOD IN HEAVEN, ***JOAN.*** I AM SO GLAD YOU'RE ***HERE!***

MATCHES

IT'S GOOD WE'RE *ALL* HERE.

IT'S A *TRADITION*...SEE...WE COME HERE... WHEN...JUST TO GET A *DRINK*...TO HONOR THE DEAD...THEY WANTED US TO BE HERE...

AND *HERE* WE ARE!

DARREN *DIED* A WHILE BACK BUT... WE *DIDN'T* LEAVE YET... HE DIED WHEN WE WERE AHEAD...WE GOT...WHAT? HOW FAR...

MUST HAVE BEEN A *HUNDRED* STEPS OR SO...WE RAN AND WE MOVED INTO... WE WERE IN THEIR TRENCHES AND HE DIED *THERE.*

BUT SINCE WE WERE THERE, COULDN'T COME BACK HERE. COULD WE? I THOUGHT WE'D *NEVER* COME BACK HERE. TRADITIONS DIE TOO, YOU KNOW.

BUT THEN THE GERMANS CAME BACK AND TOOK WHAT *WE* HAD GAINED, AND WE HAD TO SCATTER...*HOME.*

ONE HUNDRED STEPS *BACK*...LEFT... LEFT DARREN BACK WITH THE GERMANS. THEY CAN HAVE HIM, HE SMELLED SOMETHING AWFUL.

LIKE A BUTCHER'S SHOP.

IT'S LIKE A *DANCE,* YOU GO A STEP FORWARD, YOU GO A STEP BACK, ALL ACROSS THE FLOOR, SURROUNDED BY THESE...THESE CROWDS.

THERE'S A BEAT FROM THE ARTILLERY EVEN *PUSHING* YOU ALONG. ALL THAT'S MISSING IS SOME WORDS, A LITTLE TUNE.

*LOVE HERE IS MY **HEART**; ONE ROSE FOR YOUR HAIR... YOURS IF YOU KEEP IT TODAY; YOURS IF YOU **THROW** IT AWAY.*

WSSHHH

OH, *THANK* YOU, JOAN.

YOU'RE *WONDERFUL.*

WONDERFUL... AND WAITING.

WHY *DIDN'T* YOU MARRY ME, JOAN?

MATCHES

DON'T YOU *WANT* TO BE A WIDOW?

IF I AGREED TO MARRY YOU, I ***WOULDN'T*** BE A WIDOW.

I'D BE SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY. THOSE ARE THE ***RULES.***

AND YOU... YOU ***FOLLOW*** THEM...THE RULES?

THE SUN COMES AND YOU'RE ***WARM,*** THE RAIN COMES AND YOU'RE ***WET.***

THERE ARE ***RULES,*** FOLLOW THEM OR DON'T. BUT THERE THEY ARE.

A FELLOW I KNOW, WHO IS ***DEAD*** NOW, HE SAID... HE SAID THAT ONCE YOU ***KNOW*** YOU'RE GOING TO GO, YOU'RE NOT AFRAID OF IT ANYMORE.

YOU WON'T JUMP AT NOISE AND YOU'LL CHARGE AHEAD WITH JUST A ***GRAND*** SMILE ALL OVER YOUR WHOLE FACE, EAR TO EAR!

YOU'LL ENJOY THE ***WHOLE*** THING, ALL OF IT!

REALLY?

WHAT DO ***YOU*** THINK?

ME? JOAN... MY LOVE. I'M...

I KNOW ***JUST*** WHAT'S COMING. I DO.

AND I'M SO ***BLOODY*** SCARED I CAN'T BREATHE.

WE TALKED INTO THE NIGHT, HE LEFT IN THE MORNING. AND FOUR MONTHS LATER, HE RETURNED. ALONE NOW.

HE SAT AT HIS TABLE, WATCHED ALL THE ENTERTAINMENT WITHOUT A WORD, UNTIL...

WE'RE ***CLOSED,*** DANE. THE SHOW'S OVER. IT'S TIME TO GO.

I KNOW.

WILL YOU DANCE WITH ME?

THE BAND'S LEFT, THERE'S NO ***MUSIC.***

I DON'T CARE.

I *CAN'T* GO BACK.

SOMETIMES IN THE TRENCH, IT'LL BE SO COLD AT NIGHT THAT WHEN THE *SUN* COMES, IT DOESN'T DO ANYTHING AT ALL.

IT'S JUST A LIGHT THERE IN THE SKY.

AND SOMETIMES YOU'LL BE SO SOAKED FROM THE MUD THAT WHEN THE *RAIN* COMES, YOU DON'T EVEN GET WET.

IT'S JUST ANOTHER THING FALLING.

IT'S MY TURN NOW, ISN'T IT?

I *HAVE* TO GO BACK.

GOODBYE, *JOAN.*

DANE...MY SWEET DANE...PLEASE, LISTEN.

WHAT IF... WHAT IF THERE'S A WAY TO ***ESCAPE?*** TO MAKE THE WAR GO AWAY, MAKE THE WHOLE WORLD FALL AWAY AND JUST ***DISAPPEAR.*** TO HAVE A HAPPY ENDING.

I DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'D GO, I DON'T KNOW WHERE ***ANYONE*** GOES, BUT YOU WOULDN'T BE ***HERE,*** YOU WOULDN'T HAVE TO GO TO THE TRENCH.

WHAT?

DANE, MAYBE THERE'S A BETTER PLACE OR A BETTER TIME AND YOU GO ***THERE,*** OR MAYBE, I DON'T KNOW...I JUST KNOW WE...

IT'LL ***STOP.*** ALL THE BOMBS AND BULLETS. NO ONE ELSE DIES. THIS CAN BE THE END OF ***THIS*** STORY. RIGHT NOW. JUST US. JUST HERE FOREVER AND GONE IN AN INSTANT.

JOAN, WHAT ARE YOU...THERE'S NOWHERE ELSE TO GO. ***THIS*** IS ALL WE HAVE.

NO, THERE'S... LOVE IS...

I...I ***LOVE*** YOU, DANE, I LOVE YOU AND I'LL ***MARRY*** YOU. YOU HEAR ME. IT'S A ***YES.*** YES, YOU UNDERSTAND? YES.

NOW ***KISS*** ME, OKAY? JUST KISS ME.

I...

KISS ME...

HIS LIPS MET MINE.

AT FIRST, I FELT THE TREMBLE OF HIS HESITATION, BUT AS WE MOVED CLOSER, AS WE MOVED TOGETHER, HE CALMED AND STEADIED AND ALL OUR TROUBLES SEEMED TO FADE AWAY...

Torn by Love

TONY AND DON, MY WHOLE LIFE IT'S BEEN TONY AND DON! TONY, THE RESPONSIBLE ONE WITH THE GOOD GRADES AND THE GOOD FAMILY, AND DON, THE PASSIONATE ONE WHO JUST LIVES FOR TODAY. HOW CAN A GIRL DECIDE WHEN SHE JUST FEELS...

YOU GET YOUR *FILTHY* HANDS AWAY FROM MY JOAN!

YOUR JOAN? SHE'LL NEVER BE YOURS, *MAN!* SHE DOESN'T BELONG TO *ANYONE!* NO ONE DOES! EVERYONE IS FREE!

TONY OR DON! TONY OR *DON!* I *CAN'T* DECIDE BETWEEN THEM! BUT I *MUST!*

TONY OR DON. TONY AND DON. THEY ARGUE AND THEY YELL.

AND THE SUN IS WARM ON MY FACE.

AND I WAIT FOR THE RAIN.

LOOK, WE'VE ALL *BEEN* THERE! THERE'S ABSOLUTELY *NOTHING* TO BE ASHAMED OF!

YOU KNOW YOU'RE *SUPPOSED* TO BE WITH SOMEONE, AND YET YOU CAN'T STOP *SABOTAGING* YOURSELF!

IT CAN FEEL LIKE YOUR *WHOLE* LIFE IS JUST SLIPPING ON THE SAME *BANANA* PEEL DAY AFTER DAY AFTER DAY!
BUT DON'T YOU *FRET!* THERE IS *HOPE* ON THE WAY!
THE *PENNY PAGE YES'S AND NO'S OF DATING* WILL TEACH *YOU* HOW TO STAY IN LOVE *FOREVER!*

HM.

flipp

glamour hairpieces

PERFECT FOR ANY OCCASION!

MISS PETERSON?

hair

PERFECT FOR A

YES?

OKAY, DEAR.

I'M READY FOR YOU NOW.

THANKS, BUT I...

I'M A LITTLE CONFUSED, SORRY.

I'M ***SURE*** YOU ARE. THAT'S WHY YOU'RE ***HERE,*** RIGHT?

WHY DON'T YOU COME INSIDE AND WE CAN TALK ALL ABOUT IT?

WE HAVE THE ***WHOLE*** HOUR.

THE HOUR FOR WHAT?

DON'T BE SILLY, HON, C'MON IN.

YOU'RE IN ***TROUBLE,*** AREN'T YOU?

Penny P

The Yes's and N...

Penny PAGE

The Yes's and No's of Dating

LET'S GET YOU OUT OF IT.

OKAY.

WHY DON'T YOU HAVE A SEAT RIGHT *THERE,* JOAN?

JUST MAKE YOURSELF *COMFORTABLE.* DO YOU WANT ANYTHING TO DRINK? TEA OR WATER?

MAYBE IT'S A LITTLE EARLY FOR SOMETHING STRONGER, BUT THEN AGAIN MAYBE IT'S *NOT.* WHO'S TO SAY BESIDES US?

NO, I'M FINE.

THANK YOU.

WELL, YOU LET ME KNOW IF YOU CHANGE YOUR MIND.

I WANT YOU TO BE ABSOLUTELY AT HOME. I'VE GOT PLENTY OF EVERYTHING.

SURE.

BUT...

YOU KNOW WHAT? I DON'T THINK I EVER FORMALLY INTRODUCED MYSELF.

MY NAME'S *PENNY PAGE.*

OH, GREAT. I'M *JOAN.*

JOAN PETERSON.

YES, I KNOW WHO YOU ARE.

AND IT'S SO *NICE* TO HAVE YOU HERE, JOAN. I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS FOR SOME TIME.

SO...YOU...YOU GIVE... LIKE, ADVICE? IS THAT RIGHT?

I READ THE SIGN ON THE DOOR. IT'S... *DATING* ADVICE?

HAHA, ***FORGET*** THE SIGN ON THE DOOR, JOAN!

YOU SHOULD READ MY *BOOK.*

PENNY PAGE

The Yes's and No's of dating

IT'S BEEN TRANSLATED INTO OVER FORTY LANGUAGES!

THERE'S AN ABRIDGED VERSION YOU CAN BUY AS AN LP! I RECORDED IT MYSELF. IT GOT NOMINATED FOR A *GRAMMY!*

CAN YOU IMAGINE THAT, ME AND *SINATRA* IN THE SAME BUILDING, OLD BLUE EYES, MY GOODNESS.

I'M SORRY, NOT TO BE RUDE, BUT I'M... I'M A LITTLE LOST.

I DON'T UNDERSTAND EXACTLY WHAT'S *HAPPENING.*

I MEAN, THIS IS NOT WHERE I USUALLY...FIND MYSELF.

WELL, DOESN'T THAT JUST *BEG* THE QUESTION THEN?

JOAN PETERSON, MY DEAR, WHERE *DO* YOU USUALLY FIND YOURSELF?

PENNY PAGE

AH, JOAN! MY *LOVE* FOR YOU IS LIKE THE SEA ITSELF, YOU CAN SAIL IT YOUR WHOLE *LIFE* BUT NEVER UNDERSTAND HOW *VAST* IT TRULY IS!

MARRY ME!

JOAN, I CAN JUST ABOUT TRACK MY WAY TO ANYTHING, BUT EVERY PATH I SEE LEADS ONLY TO *ONE* PLACE. IT GOES RIGHT TO *YOU!*

JOAN, HONEY, YOU JUST *GOT* TO MARRY ME!

IT'S MY MOTHER'S RING, SHE TAUGHT ME TO DANCE, BUT *YOU*-- YOU TAUGHT ME TO LOVE!

JOAN PETERSON, *LOVER,* WILL YOU MARRY ME?

I'VE BEEN IN LOVE BEFORE, OR I SHOULD SAY, I *THOUGHT* I'D BEEN IN LOVE BEFORE, BUT I WAS AN IDIOT THEN, MY EYES WERE *CLOSED.*

THEY'RE *OPEN* NOW!

JOAN, PLEASE, BE MY *WIFE!*

I DON'T KNOW.

ALL KINDS OF PLACES, I GUESS.

BUT NOT TYPICALLY ***THIS*** KIND. OF PLACE. I GUESS.

SO THEN, HOW DID YOU END UP ***HERE*** ANYWAY?

CURIOUS MINDS ARE EAGER TO KNOW.

I...

I DON'T THINK YOU'D BELIEVE ME.

I DON'T THINK ***YOU'D*** BELIEVE THE STORIES I'VE HEARD IN THIS ROOM, JOAN.

EVERYONE HAS THEIR PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY WHEN IT COMES TO DATING AND WHEN TO SAY YES AND WHEN TO SAY NO.

LOVE IS THE UNIVERSE WE ALL SHARE. JUST, PLEASE, TRY ME.

YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW...

...HOW I GOT HERE?

THE TRUTH AND NOTHING BUT.

WELL, THIS WAS, I DON'T KNOW, I THINK TWENTY YEARS BACK, 1950-SOMETHING, I HAD A CRUSH ON THIS GUY, ***FRANK,*** WHO WAS MY SISTER'S BOYFRIEND.

THEN MY SISTER CHEATED ON HIM AND HE NOTICED ***ME,*** PROPOSED TO ***ME*** IN MY HOUSE.

I SAID NO, THEN I WENT OUTSIDE AND A COWBOY RODE UP ON A HORSE AND ***SHOT*** ME.

CAME TO IN YOUR LOBBY, READING A MAGAZINE. THERE WAS AN AD ABOUT WIGS.

YOU HEARD *THAT* STORY BEFORE?

HM.

YES, WELL.

HARD TO KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH ALL *THAT.*

IT IS A *LOT,* ISN'T IT?

TWENTY YEARS AGO, YOU'RE SAYING.

THE *1950s.* OKAY.

YOUR SISTER'S EX, *FRANK,* PROPOSES.

YOU TURN HIM DOWN. YOU WALK AWAY. LEAVE THE HOUSE.

A *COWBOY* COMES ON A HORSE AND SHOOTS YOU.

YOU DIE.

YOU WAKE UP IN MY LOBBY. IN THE 1970s.

WITH A MAGAZINE.

HM.

SO I GUESS THE QUESTION I HAVE IS--

--WHY THE *HECK* DID YOU TURN FRANK DOWN?

IS THAT FOR ME?

I MEAN, I'LL DRINK THEM BOTH IF YOU LET ME.

DO YOU...

YOU THINK I'M *CRAZY* OR SOMETHING. BUT IT'S--

JOAN, HONEY.

I THINK DATING IS HARD AND *LOVE* IS EVEN HARDER.

AND THE WHOLE THING, ALL OF IT, IT CAN DRIVE YOU JUST OUT OF YOUR MIND--*IF* YOU LET IT.

AND, AT THE END OF THE DAY, THANK *GOD* FOR THAT, RIGHT?

OR ELSE I'D BE OUT OF A JOB!

HAHAHAHA

IT'S NOT JUST FRANK.

I TURN A LOT OF BOYS DOWN.

JOAN, YOU CAN'T...

I CAN'T. I *CAN'T.*

AND I WON'T.

MAYBE IF YOU *THINK* ON IT, JOAN, MAYBE LATER...

I *HAVE* THOUGHT ABOUT IT, FOR A LONG TIME, LONGER THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.

AND THIS IS *BEST,* YOU JUST RIDE ALONG INTO THE SUNSET. AND JUST LET *ME* GO THE OTHER WAY.

FINE! STAY HERE! I DON'T EVEN *CARE!* THE WORLD IS *BIG,* JOAN! BIGGER THAN YOU!

SEE WHAT IT'S LIKE TRYING TO DANCE BY *YOURSELF!*

I DON'T WANT TO MAKE A SCENE, I JUST IMAGINED US ALWAYS... OH, *CRUD...* WHY CAN'T YOU JUST SAY *YES,* ISN'T THAT EASIER?

THE *WAITER'S* COMING, LET'S JUST ORDER SOME FOOD.

MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING WORTH EATING.

SIGH

I KNOW YOU DO, HON.

BUT WHEN YOU DO IT, DO YOU KNOW HOW MUCH IT *UPSETS* YOUR POOR MOTHER?

MY *MOTHER?* WHICH MOTHER?

I HAVE SO MANY.

YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY *ADORABLE* SOMETIMES. I SEE WHY YOU'RE SO POPULAR.

I MEAN, THE MOTHER WHO'S SO *UPSET* SHE SENDS A SILLY COWBOY TO KILL YOU. DESPITE ME BEGGING HER NOT TO.

BUT EVERY TIME, BANG.

WH-WHAT?

JOAN. OH NO.

YOU SPILLED.

I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND.

WHAT'S TO *UNDERSTAND?* YOU SAY NO AND FACE CONSEQUENCES THAT YOU, I ASSUME, DISLIKE.

AND I'D LIKE TO FIND A WAY TO GET YOU TO A PLACE WHERE *YOU* MAKE BETTER CHOICES, SMARTER CHOICES.

YOU *KNOW?*

WE REALLY *SHOULD* CLEAN THAT UP. IT'S GOING TO STAIN. THESE ARE *NEW* CARPETS, JUST HAD THEM INSTALLED.

YOU FUCKING *KNOW!*

JOAN.

HOW COULD I GIVE YOU HONEST ADVICE IF I DIDN'T? DON'T BE *STUPID.* AND DON'T SWEAR, PLEASE. IT DOESN'T BECOME YOU.

IF YOUR MOTHER FOUND OUT...

WHAT ARE YOU...WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?

JOAN, YOU'RE BEING *TIRESOME.* I'M NOT SOME BOY HERE TO WOO YOU AND FORGIVE YOU FOR EVERYTHING.

I'M HERE TO BE *HONEST* WITH YOU. TO *HELP* YOU.

WHAT?

WHO... WHO THE *FUCK* ARE YOU?!

PENNY PAGE

I'M *PENNY PAGE,* I GIVE ADVICE.

THE YES'S AND NO'S OF DATING.

YOU KNOW... ABOUT...ABOUT THE *COWBOY...* IT'S NOT...

MY *MOTHER?* WHAT THE *FUCK* IS THIS?!

WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON?!

WHAT THE FUCK...

THAT'S *ENOUGH* OF THAT LANGUAGE!

I WON'T STAND FOR IT!

I SAID *ENOUGH!*

JOAN S. PETERSON.

WAKE UP.

IT'S TIME YOU STARTED ACTING LIKE A *WOMAN.*

PENNY PAGE

JESUS...

I REALLY, *REALLY* HATE BEING SO... DIRECT.

GOD!

IT'S HONESTLY *NOT* IN MY NATURE.

BUT I'M NOT A FREE SERVICE, I'M IN *HIGH* DEMAND AND YOUR MOTHER PAID *GOOD* MONEY FOR ME TO TALK TO YOU.

AND I DON'T WANT TO WASTE *HER* MONEY AND YOUR *TIME*...AND *MY* TIME GOING AROUND AND AROUND AND AROUND LIKE SOME PONY RIDE.

WHAT... WHAT AM I?

WHY ARE YOU WORRIED ABOUT *THAT?* YOU'RE LIKE ANYONE ELSE.

YOU'RE A GIRL WITH *DATING* PROBLEMS.

A GIRL WHO SHOULD SAY *YES* WHEN SOMEONE PROPOSES TO HER. AND SHOULD SAY *NO* TO WHATEVER IT IS THAT BRINGS THAT COWBOY.

THERE'S A WAY TO DO THINGS, A VERY *PROPER* WAY TO DO THINGS.

THERE'S A PATH THAT YOU GO DOWN AND IF YOU DO IT RIGHT, EVERYTHING IS SUNSETS AND CANDLES AND THERE ARE *NO* TEARS.

AND *YOU'RE* DOING EVERYTHING ALL WRONG.

C'MON, JOAN.

LET'S BE ***TRUE*** WITH ONE ANOTHER. LET'S FIGURE OUT HOW TO GET YOU WHERE YOU NEED TO BE.

IT'S ALL ABOUT ***YOUR*** HAPPINESS. THAT'S WHAT ROMANCE IS. DON'T YOU ***WANT*** TO BE HAPPY?

PLEASE.

OKAY, GOOD, THANK YOU.

WAS THAT SO HARD?

MAYBE WE CAN GET STARTED AGAIN?

LET'S FIGURE THIS OUT ***TOGETHER,*** HOW TO GET YOU TO A PLACE WHERE EVERYTHING'S NOT ***TOPSY-TURVY*** AND YOU'RE MARCHING WITH THE RIGHT STEP.

WHERE I CAN GO BACK TO YOUR ***MOTHER*** AND SAY, "SHE'S RIGHT WHERE SHE NEEDS TO BE."

SHE'S SAYING ***YES.***

HOW DOES ***THAT*** SOUND?

EXCUSE ME?!

I'M *DONE!* ALL THIS SHIT, ALL THESE LIVES.

YOU CAN'T JUST--

:SIGH: JOAN, YOU NEED TO *CALM DOWN.*

I'M OFFERING YOU AN OPPORTUNITY HERE, NOT CRITICISM, I WANT TO *LISTEN,* AND I WANT TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S GONE WRONG.

THIS IS *LOVE* YOU'RE BEING OFFERED, HONEY, YOU GOT TO WAKE UP AND SMELL THE *ROSES* THESE BOYS ARE GIVING YOU.

WAKE UP? I WAKE UP IN A LOBBY...I WAKE UP IN BED...I WAKE UP A HUNDRED YEARS AGO... I WAKE UP YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW I WAKE UP...

DON'T YOU KNOW?

I'M FUCKING AWAKE!

OH, JOAN, YOU *POOR* THING.

YOU'RE IN SUCH A BAD HEADSPACE. WE NEED TO CLEAR YOU UP.

I WANT TO KNOW WHAT THIS IS...WHO ARE YOU... WHO IS...

WHY AM I GOING *THROUGH* THIS? WHAT THE *FUCK* DID I DO?

HOW...HOW DO I GET OUT OF IT?! WHO THE FUCK *AM* I?!

THOSE ARE *EXCELLENT* QUESTIONS, THE ESSENTIAL ONES REALLY AT THE HEART OF ALL DATING PROBLEMS, IF YOU THINK ABOUT IT.

AND I WANT TO TALK ABOUT THEM, I DO.

BUT I'M NOT DOING *ANYTHING* WITH YOU TREATING ME LIKE THAT.

SLASH

AAAA!

DO YOU UNDERSTAND THAT I'M TRYING TO DO THIS THE *NICE* WAY?!

THIS IS NEITHER THE TIME NOR THE PLACE FOR VIOLENCE!

DO YOU KNOW...

...WHAT HAPPENS... TO ME...

...WHEN I SAY *NO?*

BANG

LOVE IS EVERLASTING.

BANG

LOVE IS EVERLASTING.

BANG

LOVE IS EVERLASTING.

LOVE IS EVERLASTING.

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO TALK TO *ME* ABOUT...

...VIOLENCE?

OKAY...

OKAY, JOAN, IF THAT'S...

IF THIS IS THE ONLY WAY YOU CAN *PROCESS* SOME THINGS, THEN *FINE.* IT'S NOT WHAT I PREFER, NOT BY A COUNTRY MILE, BUT FINE.

JUST...JUST LET ME MAKE A PHONE CALL.

FUCK THE PHONE.

YOU HAVE QUESTIONS. YOU NEED *ANSWERS.* I *GET* IT. I'M ON *YOUR* SIDE.

BUT YOUR... YOUR *MOTHER* WOULDN'T WANT ME TO...THERE ARE THINGS SHE'D TELL YOU, THINGS I CAN'T EXPLAIN TO YOU RIGHT HERE.

I WORK FOR HER, SHE PAYS ME, I CAN'T DO...YOUR MOTHER CAN TELL YOU WHAT IS HAPPENING, OKAY? SHE'S THE EXPERT IN *THAT.*

PLEASE, JOAN. IT'S THE *ONLY* WAY.

LET ME JUST CALL YOUR *MOTHER.*

THEN YOU'LL GET WHAT YOU WANT. I SWEAR.

CLLLLLLICK

IT'S RINGING.

DON'T WORRY. I'M SURE SHE'S THERE.

MADAME, IT'S PENNY, I'M IN THE OFFICE NOW. JOAN IS WITH ME.

SHE'D LIKE TO SPEAK TO YOU IN PERSON. SHE IS *INSISTING* UPON IT. AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. I WOULD SAY IT IS AN EMERGENCY.

SHE'S ASKING--

YES, MADAME....NO, I...YES, MADAME...I TRIED TO, MADAME, BUT...

YES, MADAME... YES, MADAME... NO, I DON'T SEE HOW...

YES, MADAME...YES, MADAME...

YES, MADAME.

ALL RIGHT. YOU GOT WHAT YOU *WANTED.* SHE'S NOT HAPPY, BUT SHE'S ON HER WAY NOW.

SHE'S ON THE TOP FLOOR, *OBVIOUSLY,* AND THE ELEVATORS HERE CAN GET FULL AT THIS TIME OF DAY, IT ALWAYS SEEMS.

IT'LL JUST TAKE A *FEW* MINUTES.

CLICKK

THIS REALLY ISN'T HOW YOU SHOULD DO IT, YOU ***SHOULD*** SIT AND LISTEN AND WE CAN TALK, I'M NOT LIKE THE COWBOY, I THINK THAT'S ***CRUEL.***

I'M HERE TO ACTUALLY HELP, GET YOU TO A PLACE WHERE YOU JUST FORGET ALL THIS... I DON'T KNOW, RESISTANCE, AND...JUST...I MEAN, IT'S ***LOVE,*** JOAN.

IS THERE ANYTHING WRONG WITH LOVE?

I'M NOT THE PERSON TO ASK.

OH, GIVE ME A BREAK, HON.

YOU'RE THE ONE WHO'S MAKING ALL THE TROUBLE.

IT SEEMS TO ME THAT TO KNOW SOMETHING, YOU HAVE TO NOT KNOW IT.

EVERYTHING IS TWO-SIDED, IF YOU ONLY SEE ONE SIDE, YOU'RE MISSING IT.

AND I'M ALWAYS IN LOVE.

KNOCK KNOCK

WELL, ***THAT*** WAS QUICK.

GUESS THERE WAS ROOM ON THE ELEVATOR.

KNOCK KNOCK

I'M COMING, *MADAME,* ONE MOMENT!

SHE CAN BE A *LITTLE* IMPATIENT.

WHICH I THINK YOU'LL AGREE, *MIGHT* JUST RUN IN THE FAMILY.

I'M JOKING, I'M JOKING!

YOU KNOW, I UNDERSTAND YOUR THINKING, BUT I'D PUT AWAY THE LETTER OPENER, IT'S *OKAY* NOW.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO WORRY.

THERE IS *NO ONE* IN THE WHOLE WORLD WHO LOVES YOU MORE THAN YOUR *MOTHER,* YOU'LL SEE.

IT'S ALL GOING TO BE FINE.

HEY THERE, *PENNY,* HOW ARE YOU, GIRL? *MADAME* SENDS HER SALUTATIONS AND REGRETS.

I'M SURE.

NO!!

YOU HAVE TO SAY IT EVERY TIME?

ORDERS IS ORDERS. YOU DON'T THINK *I'M* TIRED OF IT?

LOVE IS...

AAAAAAAA!!

I TRIED SO HARD TO OUTRUN MY SCANDALOUS PAST. BUT JUST AS CHET AND I HAD FINALLY FOUND HAPPINESS, IT CAUGHT UP TO ME! IT JUST GOES TO SHOW, NO MATTER WHERE YOU FLEE TO OR HOW FAST YOU'RE DASHING AWAY, YOU WILL ALWAYS BE...

TRAPPED BY LOVE

I THOUGHT I KNEW YOU, ***JOAN!*** THESE BARS ARE LIKE YOUR LIES, THE ***BARRIER*** THAT STANDS BETWEEN YOU AND ME!

OH ***CHET,*** ALL I WANTED TO BE WAS FREE, AND NOW LOOK AT ***ME!*** WHEN WILL I LEARN... WHEN WILL I LEARN...

TOM KING
WRITER

ELSA CHARRETIER
ARTIST

MATT HOLLINGSWORTH
COLORIST

CLAYTON COWLES
LETTERER

BIOS!

An intro to the creative team on LOVE EVERLASTING

TOM KING

Writer

Tom King is a multiple Eisner, Ringo, and Harvey award-winning writer known for his work on *Mister Miracle*, *Batman*, *The Vision*, *The Sheriff of Babylon*, *Strange Adventures*, *The Human Target*, *Superman Up in the Sky*, and many others. His work has appeared on the New York Times best sellers list numerous times. In 2021, King's work on *The Vision* was the inspiration for the hit TV show *WandaVision*. Prior to his writing career, King served overseas in the Iraq and Afghanistan theaters of war as a counter-terrorism officer in the CIA. He lives in Washington DC with his wife and three children.

ELSA CHARRETIER

Artist

Elsa is a comic book artist and writer. Early in her career, she's illustrated numerous books for DC Comics, Marvel Comics, IDW Publishing, Random House, Disney and Lucasfilm and have now shifted her focus to her independent work, most notably NOVEMBER with Matt Fraction and LOVE EVERLASTING with Tom King (both published by Image Comics). In collaboration with PK Colinet, co-founder of their studio Big Head Little Arms, she's also successfully ran four large Kickstarter campaigns and launched a Comics Case Study YouTube channel.

Matt Hollingsworth

Colorist

Matt Hollingsworth is an award-winning color artist. In his 31 years in the industry, he's worked on *Preacher*, *Hellboy*, *Daredevil*, *Hawkeye* and many other comics. During a brief detour, he worked on visual effects for such movies as *Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow* and *Serenity*. Born and raised in California, he now lives in Croatia with his amazing wife, awesome son, wiggle-tailed dog, and four fuzzy cats who rule the roost.

CLAYTON COWLES

Letterer

Clayton Cowles is an Eisner and Ringo-nominated letterer. In addition to mainstream titles like *Daredevil*, *X-Men*, and *Batman*, Clayton has worked on ADVENTUREMAN, BITCH PLANET, DIE, MOONSTRUCK, PRETTY DEADLY, REDLANDS, THE WICKED + THE DIVINE, and a host of other books published by Image Comics. He lives in upstate New York in a house with two cats.

COVERS!

A gallery of all the variant covers for LOVE EVERLASTING #1–5

TOM KING
ELSA CHARRETIER
LOVE EVERLASTING
AUG. NO. 1
THE POOR SHERIFF... HE DOESN'T KNOW I SAVED A BULLET FOR HIM!
TRUE LOVE stories

Clay Mann

Elsa Charretier

Tula Lotay

Jenny Frison

Leslie Hung

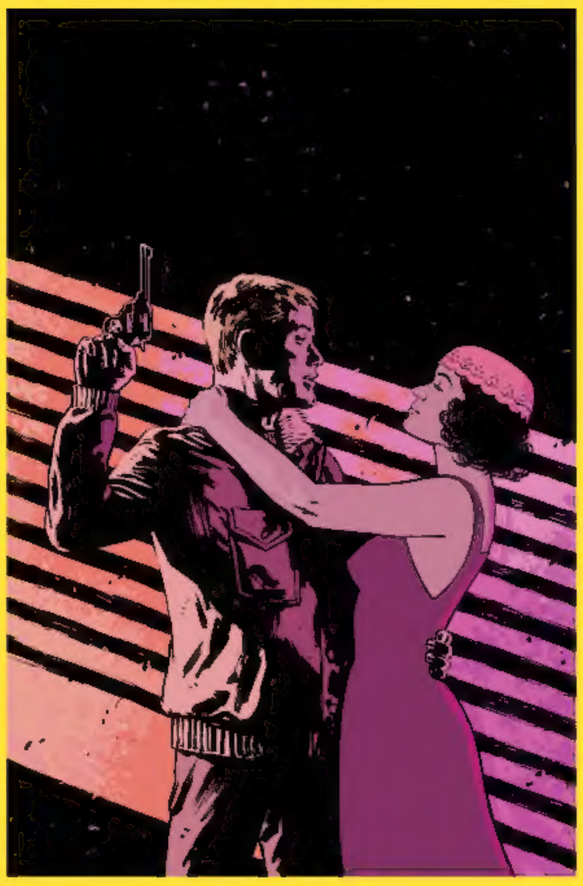
Rafael Albuquerque

Matias Bergara

Alison Sampson

Terry and Rachel Dodson

Stjepan Šejić



Sean Phillips and Pip Martin

Amanda Conner and Jimmy Palmiotti

From superstar creators TOM KING and ELSA CHARRETIER comes the first volume of a thrilling epic in the tradition of *Sandman* and SAGA.

Joan Peterson discovers that she is trapped in an endless, terrifying cycle of "romance"--a problem to be solved, a man to marry--and every time she falls in love she's torn from her world and thrust into another tear-soaked tale. Her bloody journey to freedom and revelation starts in this breathtaking, groundbreaking collected edition.

"Romance comics meet *Quantum Leap* in this quirky odyssey through time, space, and the heart... King energizes the familiar romance genre with twists and turns that fuse each of Joan's trysts into an intricate puzzle... Charretier's thick-line cartoony character design, reminiscent of Darwyn Cooke, perfectly depicts this genre crossover."

--*PUBLISHERS WEEKLY* (STARRED REVIEW)

"King (*Supergirl: Woman of Tomorrow*) and Charretier's (THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH) gripping mystery subverts the romance-comic genre but still delivers genuine romance melodrama. An uncommonly compelling first volume."

--*LIBRARY JOURNAL* (STARRED REVIEW)

image

COLLECTS LOVE EVERLASTING #1-5
Fantasy / Horror / Romance

TKEC

Rated T+ / TEEN PLUS

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